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LECTURES

ON

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

BY

JOHN N. NORTON

RECTOR OF ASCENSION CHURCH, FRANKFORT, KY.; AUTHOR OF "FULL
PROOF OF THE MINISTRY," "ROCKFORD PARISH," "SHORT
SERMONS," "LIVES OF THE BISHOPS," ETC.

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TO

THE REV. SAMUEL H. TURNER, D. D.,

*Professor of Biblical Learning and Interpretation of Scripture, in
the General Theological Seminary, New York :*

REV. AND DEAR SIR :—

A learned divine, who has favored the world with several great works, can hardly be expected to regard with much interest, a contribution so comparatively trifling as this, and I only venture to inscribe your name on this opening page, in the hope that a tribute of affectionate regard from a former pupil, may not be unacceptable to you, however small its intrinsic worth.

With the earnest prayer that a gracious Providence may long preserve a life, so precious to the Church as yours, believe me, with great respect and veneration,

Your friend,

THE AUTHOR.

“THERE is in man, and ever has been, a tendency to extol unduly, to elevate beyond their due place, the attainments of the saints of God. It is natural: they belong to the world of sight; they are seen, felt, known, and live among us: all our love for goodness and holiness naturally rests in them, since in them we see them exemplified and expressed: the legitimate veneration to the good man soon oversteps the boundary line, and we give to the creature the homage due only to the CREATOR. The Church of Rome, throughout her history, shows that the inclination, strong in the days of heathenism and philosophy, is strong still, and the faults of the good seem permitted to float to the surface, that they may be seen and noticed by the world, that the holy may not overrate their fellow-men, nor the saint lose his balance and equipose by the undue admiration of his fellow. “Trust not in man, nor in any child of man.” “Put your trust in God.”

PRACTICAL SERMONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.

“God permits the failings of good men, that we may plainly see that there is no person in whom nature is not corrupted.”

BISHOP WILSON'S SACRA PRIVATA.

P R E F A C E.

A COURSE of plain, practical lectures on some portion of Sacred History, is sure to engage the attention of a congregation. The popularity of the excellent works of this character published by the Rev. Henry Blunt, shows that such discourses will not only be heard with interest from the pulpit, but that they will be read with pleasure and profit, long after the voice of the preacher is hushed in death.

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The venerated Bishop Griswold makes modest mention of the fact, that his people requested the publication of a course of

lectures on the Four Gospels, numbering eighty or ninety;* and it is much to be regretted that he did not yield to their solicitations. He might thus have been preaching to many more than heard them during his life.

Although a goodly number of sermons have already been published, there is room for more. Each work of the kind fills some nook of its own, and reaches a class of readers who are interested in the author, or who are attracted by the subject.

It is the custom in many families to have a sermon read to the assembled household on Sunday night, and one reason which has prompted the writer to send forth this little volume, was the hope that he might thus be preaching, in an humble way, to some beyond the limits of his pastoral charge. He has

* Dr. Stone's Life of Griswold, p. 184.

been too kindly treated by the public, to anticipate any wrong construction of his motives.

Should this volume meet with a favorable reception, another of a similar character, on the life of Joseph, will follow it.

“IN a great naval contest of England, we are told that one ship ran aground so as to be entirely out of reach of the enemy, but contributed very much to the victory, by serving as a beacon to the other ships bearing down into action. It was not a way of contributing to victory which any brave captain would choose, but it would be a matter of rejoicing, even in this way to serve one's country. And so, though we would not choose that holy men of old should have fallen into sins, we rejoice that the great CAPTAIN of our salvation is making use of their failures to swell the triumphs of his people, and to bring glory to his own name.”

REV. WILLIAM H. LEWIS, D. D.

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LECTURE I.

HE CHOSE DAVID HIS SERVANT, AND TOOK HIM FROM THE SHEEPFOLDS, . . . TO FEED JACOB HIS PEOPLE, AND ISRAEL HIS INHERITANCE.—Psalm lxxviii. 70-1.

IN several particulars, David was the most conspicuous and highly favored of the ancient worthies. He was a type of our blessed Saviour, and the author of many of those Psalms which have formed so large a part of the service of God's Church, under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. He was a prophet and a king. David stands out in striking contrast with the prominent men of his own generation, and is as remarkable "for an affectionate, a thankful, a loyal heart towards his God and Defender, a zeal which was as fervent and as docile as Saul was sullen, and as keen-sighted and as pure, as Balaam was selfish and double-minded."

Jesse, an humble peasant of Israel, had eight sons, of whom David was the youngest.

He was born, according to the best computations, in the year of the world, 2919.*

There was nothing in David's ancestry to entitle him to consideration, and although as the descendant of Tamor, and Rahab, and Ruth, he might be supposed to share in the favor which God had shown to them; still, so far as his worldly advancement was concerned, he seemed to have no advantages beyond those of any other shepherd boy.

It would appear, from incidental notices in the sacred story, that David was of a devout and serious mind, unusual for his years, and this, in the providence of God, smoothed the way for his signal prosperity. Those who love and honor God, will be loved and honored by HIM in return.

Actions are the best test of character, and from these we ought chiefly to form our judgment of a person's worth. We may, however, sometimes look at other evidence besides. Thus, although the language of cant, freely spoken on the house-top, is a pretty sure indication of hypocrisy and wickedness within, the outpourings of the devout soul in the presence of its God, can

* Calmet's Dictionary, (London edit.) p. 329.

be ascribed to nothing which is inconsistent with the character professed.

The eighth Psalm, as has been generally thought, was composed by David during his early years. It opens with that rapturous burst of devotion, "O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth: Thou that hast set Thy glory above the Heavens!" Observe the humility of the youthful poet, as he contrasts his own weak and lowly condition, with the might and majesty of the High and Holy One: "Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."

And while the shepherd boy watched over his flock by night, (thus presenting another point of resemblance to the GREAT and GOOD SHEPHERD, our LORD JESUS CHRIST,) he gazed up at the spangled firmament above, and, long before the days of telescopes and of marvellous astronomical discoveries, he read in every shining star fresh proof of God's almighty power, and drew from thence inspiring hopes of a coming REDEEMER, who, while condescending to be born of an obscure

virgin, should still be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Listen to David's meditations upon the wonderful works of God :—" When I consider Thy heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou makest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship."

But besides such exalted expressions of love and devotion to his Heavenly Father, David's *actions* also showed that he had within him a true and living faith. Nothing has been recorded for the purpose of establishing this point; but the undesigned testimony which is afforded, is far more convincing than a labored argument. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep," said the heroic lad, in answer to a question put by Saul, "and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard and slew him."

But do not be in haste to accuse David of

vain boasting. See where his courage came from! He adds, with becoming modesty, and with the most assured faith in a higher power:—"The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.*

This is only one instance, indeed, but it shows clearly the character of the youth, and tells us of his habits of mind, and of his unreserved dependence upon the Almighty.

Such was David;—a poor, obscure boy, but one of high and noble principles, and destined to act a most conspicuous part on the theatre of life.

We pause for a moment here, to remind parents of the important lesson which the early history of the King of Israel conveys. Let them do as old Jesse did,—train up their children in the way they should go,—and in after years they will reap the rich fruit of their faithful labors. We are told to "seek first the Kingdom of God," and the righteousness thereof, with the assured anticipation that all needful things will be added unto us.

* 1 Samuel, xvii. 34-37.

Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.*

The young have been instructed by David himself, as to the way in which God's love and favor may be gained. He looked up to the Almighty for help. So should all others do.

“With hearty zeal for thee I seek—
To thee for succor pray;
O suffer not my careless steps,
From Thy right paths to stray.

“Safe in my heart, and closely hid,
Thy word, my treasure, lies,
To succor me with timely aid,
When sinful thoughts arise.”

Saul, who at first had proved himself worthy to sit upon the throne of Israel, had fallen, by degrees, into many evil habits, and finally provoked the Lord to punish him, for not dealing with some of the heathen as he had been commanded to do.

The prophet Samuel was accordingly sent to Bethlehem, to annoint as the future king, one of the sons of Jesse, who should be designated when he reached the place. Seven goodly youths passed in succession before the man of God, beginning with Eliab,

* St. Matthew, vi. 33. 1 Timothy iv. 8.

the eldest born; but the old gray haired seer shook his head, saying to the astonished father, "The Lord hath not chose these,—are here all thy children?"

Then David was summoned in haste from the fields, where he kept the sheep; and as he drew near, glowing with health, and his countenance beaming with intelligence, the Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

So the prophet took oil, and poured it upon David's head, signifying thereby that he should one day be King, instead of Saul. The sacred historian adds, that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

In this act of anointing, David was also a type of our blessed Lord. Thus, in the 45th Psalm, David, speaking in the character of prophet, says to the Messiah, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; wherefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness, above Thy fellows."*

* The Son of God came through wrong to establish righteousness, and through death to give eternal life; and therefore was He the beloved in whom the Father was

There can be no real goodness without God's HOLY SPIRIT. Whatever in the character of David was pure and lovely, must be attributed to this source, and to this alone.

While, therefore, we are led to look with admiration upon those who show forth heavenly tempers in their lives, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the Blessed Spirit who wrought such a change in *them*, is willing and anxious to do the same for *us*.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost will be measured out in proportion to our needs. A man in a very high station, such as the head and ruler of a mighty people, or the bishop of an

well pleased ; therefore did the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him ; therefore was He anointed with the Spirit without measure. His body was anointed for burial—for His fellows—for He became mortal to give them immortality ; and, therefore, was the Messiah of the world anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And that unction of unmeasured grace which is poured upon His head flows down over all His garments. The members share in that which their Head has gained. The sweetness of His humility, the perfume of His holiness, the richness of His wisdom, will be imparted unto them, as the ointment of myrrh, aloes, and of cassia, gives fragrance to the garments it is sprinkled on.—*Plain Commentary on Psalms*, vol. i. p. 304.

extensive diocese, or even a parish minister, requires more help from above than an ordinary Christian.

Grace enough will be given to each one who seeketh for it with earnestness and prayer.* It is the best blessing we can have.

When God bestows His grace upon us in Baptism, and Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper, and in answer to our prayers, we ought to be most careful not to lose it afterwards. No greater misfortune could possibly happen to us. David felt this to be so, for he often prayed, as long as he lived, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me."†

* Collects for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Easter Day, the First Sunday after Trinity, the Festival of St. Bartholomew, and others. Dr. James' "Comment upon the Collects" is an excellent work for devotional purposes, and may be read with profit before engaging in the services of the Church, on Sundays and Holydays.

† Psalm li. 11. "We may see what David prized by what he deprecates. There were many calamities, at the thought of which his heart might have trembled. He could remember how God for his disobedience had punished his predecessor, Saul, and had rent the kingdom from him. He knew how God by Nathan had threatened himself: and he could not help feeling the announcement, that the

We are told next, that when "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David," this Holy Being, with his sacred influences of grace and goodness, "departed from Saul."

Poor, forsaken, wretched man! What has he left, worth speaking of? God's good Spirit gone—for ever gone!

Nor was this all. The withdrawing of the Spirit of the Lord from the miserable king, was followed by repeated attacks from an evil spirit, as a divine judgment upon him. His mind was depressed, and rage, fury, and unnatural hatred took up their silent dominion within him. The symptoms of his disease resembled those which we are accustomed to ascribe to derangement.

As Saul was no worse, in the beginning, than many who are living now, it may be well to ask what particular fault was the cause of so much misery. Wilfulness and unbelief are the characteristics of his history.

child should die, and the sword never depart from his house. Yet he does not say, O let me escape the rod—do not deprive me of my throne—or involve my family in trouble and disgrace. This is what many would have implored. But David prays: Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me!—*William Jay's Works*, vol. i. p. 133. (Harper's edit.)

His ear was closed against the plainest commands of God, and his heart encased in adamant. Once, he had enjoyed his day of grace. God's Holy Spirit had rested on him. Afterwards, he became reckless and debased.

The same Holy Spirit has been imparted to us, who have been brought into covenant with God, through the appointed means of grace.

If we sin now, our offence will be far greater than before. Alas, for those who having once escaped from the bondage of an evil world, are again entangled and overcome! "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."*

Here, then, are two characters, either of which we are free to imitate. We may be like David,—loved of God, and blessed by the enlightening and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit: or we may be like Saul,—forsaken of God, and an outcast from His favor.

If the temper and disposition of our minds, and the regulation of our lives be in accordance with the will of God, the Holy Spirit will make His abode with us. But if we are

* 2 Peter ii. 21.

headstrong, and selfish, and disobedient,—if the best affections of the heart are choked and kept down by the manifold corruptions which are allowed to enter therein,—then God's Spirit will go away.

Whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning. Let us give good heed to these warnings from the past. One great use of biography is to teach us to follow the virtues, and to shun the vices, of those concerning whom we read.

No character is portrayed in the Bible with more diversified pictures of light and shade than that of the shepherd king. May we all lay to heart its touching and impressive lessons.

COLLECT.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

LECTURE II.

I COME TO THEE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE
GOD OF THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL, WHOM THOU HAST DEFIED.—
1 Samuel, xvii. 45.

WE turn over a new leaf in David's history. It was stated in the last lecture, that when the Spirit of the Lord came upon the devout and heroic boy, who was destined to be the future king of Israel, this Heavenly Visitant abandoned Saul.

Although wicked men may richly deserve much more than they are required to suffer, few can behold them in the hour of their darkness and tribulation, without feelings of pity. So the attendants about King Saul, distressed at his wretched lot, devised various plans which seemed to promise temporary relief from the malady which rendered his life an intolerable burden.

Among other things, they suggested the cheering effects of music. This idea pleased

him, and "it was in an hour when the fitful storm brooded over his mind, that a youth was introduced to his presence,—a shepherd youth, that drew from the harp of Israel its holiest and sweetest sounds,—a most gracious music, that fell as a voice from heaven upon the morbid feelings of the monarch, and charmed that agitated breast into repose,—that morbid breast to which peace had been long a stranger. That youth was David; David, the rustic boy; David, yet free and ardent, and happy; David, yet pure in his enthusiasm, yet throbbing with incipient poetry, with innocent affections, with patriotic ardor, with every generous desire."

But we are anticipating the real order of events. According to the arrangement of our English Bible, David is represented, in the *sixteenth* chapter of the first book of Samuel, as being sent for to employ his skill in music, for the benefit of Saul; and then, in the *seventeenth* chapter, when David fights the Philistine giant, Saul inquires of Abner, who this youthful champion is. How could the king have been thus ignorant, if he had known Jesse's son before?

The truth is, the chapters should be trans-

posed, and thus every difficulty is removed.*

A war was raging between the Philistines and the children of Israel, at which time some of David's elder brothers were serving in the army under command of Saul. God's people, by their disobedience, had lost His favor, and hence they had less confidence in themselves; and when a great heathen giant, clad in glittering mail, came forth and challenged them to the fight, their souls died within them through craven fear.

A seemingly trivial occurrence now brings David into notice. His aged father sends him down to the scene of strife, as a mere messenger, to carry provisions for his brethren in the camp. As the youthful hero draws near the bloody field,* words of proud defiance fall upon his ear, and in spite of the sarcastic remark of Eliab, Jesse's eldest born, he volunteers to go forth, and do battle for the Lord. Flattered, at first, by Saul's proposal that he

* See Notes in Townsend's Bible, (edited by Dr. Coit,) vol. i. p. 404.

* The battle field is marked out for the traveler by the learned Dr. Robinson, in his "Biblical Researches in Palestine," vol. ii. p. 21.

should accept his own royal armor, he might have been less successful had he gone to battle in that showy array, than when trusting alone in the power of God. Recovering his self-possession in a moment, he positively declined the sword and helmet which the king had kindly offered for his use, and putting a few smooth stones in a shepherd's pouch, and taking a sling in his hand, he hastened forward, with holy boldness, against presumptuous self-confidence and conceit.

Ignorant of the arts of war,—a mere strippling in age and strength,—unprotected by armor, and unprovided with weapons of defence, he trusted in the justice of his cause, and in the power of the God of heaven, whose honor had been trampled in the dust. Can we for one moment doubt as to what the result would be? The monster fell down dead before David's missile, and the victory was complete.

This part of the young hero's story has a direct application to ourselves. True religion makes no man a coward. The bravest soldiers who have ever faced the cannon's mouth, and headed the fierce onset, have been devout servants of God. And there is good reason why

this should be the case. When one feels that the eye of the Almighty is looking upon him with favor, he must of necessity be bold for any deed of noble daring. The certainty that God is on *his* side, will nerve the feeblest arm. What trembling skeptic would not envy the faith which led the brave Lord Astley to pray, before he charged at the battle of Edgehill, "O Lord, Thou knowest how busy I must be this day; if I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me!"

But the lesson which we should learn, is of still wider application. All of us who have been baptized, have enlisted as soldiers of Christ. A challenge, more bold and presumptuous than that of Goliath, of Gath, has been thrown down by the power of darkness, in the face of high Heaven, insulting the majesty of God, and calling upon us, if we dare, to come out and fight upon the side of truth, and in opposition to the cause of sin. The odds all seem against us. The devil and his attendant spirits are giants in size and strength, and fully armed. We, like the youthful David, are exposed to fearful peril. But the same Almighty Being who gave *him* strength, is ready to succor *us*.

Like him, we can boldly say to the vaunting foe, "Thou comest to us with sword, and spear, and shield—with all thy infernal weapons, and hellish arts; but we fear thee not—our trust is in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."*

Forget not, you that by baptism have put on Christ—forget not the manly part which it becomes you all to act. Even children in age can be bold for God and His Church, and do good service in the world. The smooth stone from the brook, when used in faith, is better far, than a sword in the hand of unbelief.

Wo to those, who, having learned the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the

* I have often thought that it is an argument for David's authorship of that noble psalm, the *Deus auribus*, that it contains the passage, 'I will not trust in my bow: it is not my sword that shall help me; but it is THOU that savest us from our enemies.' For again he says, 'Through THEE will we overthrow our enemies, and in Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.' There is something here of the youthful hero, as well as of the sweet singer of Israel. The reliance of youth is celebrated in age. It has been tried, and it endures.—*The Rev. A. C. Coxe's Sermons*, p. 206.

Ten Commandments, would venture to lay aside this simple shepherd's scrip, and clothe themselves in the untried armor of novel theories, and the religious dogmas of modern systems! The old shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, are ready for our use.

SOLDIERS of CHRIST, arise,
And put your armor on;
Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Through His eternal SON,

Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power;
Who in the strength of JESUS trusts,
Is more than conqueror.

It is supposed that the *ninth* Psalm was composed by David, upon the occasion of his victory over Goliath. According to a translation of the Chaldee paraphrast, it is expressly said to have been written "Upon the death of the *Champion*"—the very title, you perceive, by which the Philistine giant is called.*

Saul, in his perplexity and distress, had

* See Exton's Lectures on the Psalms, p. 17; and Coit's Bible, vol. i. p. 406.

made the most liberal promises to the man who should kill this uncircumcised Philistine; and now that the deed was done, he faithfully kept his word. David was "set over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people." (1 Samuel xviii. 5).

Each one of us, my friends, who proves himself to be a faithful soldier of the Cross, may confidently look for a still more glorious reward. A KING will acknowledge our services at the last; not a weak and faulty one, like Saul, but He who sits upon the throne of Heaven—even the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY!

David was received with marks of royal favor, in the sight of all Israel; but before an assembled universe the King of Glory will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord!"

The season of David's prosperity, at first, was destined to be short. In justice to Saul, we ought, perhaps, to say, that his mental derangement made him more unreasonable and complaining than he might otherwise have been; but the truth is, it vexed him sorely to be obliged to bestow such signal honors upon a poor shepherd boy, and to acknowledge that *his* sling and stone had done much more for

Israel's glory and defence, than all the imposing panoply of war.

But Saul's jealousy and ill will must have a sorer trial yet. The sacred penman adds: "And it came to pass, that when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played and said,—

‘Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands.’

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, ‘They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?’ ”

Do not move on too proudly, young hero, in this thy first triumphal march. There is evil crouching in thy path. What sad workings of jealousy and wounded pride, and vindictiveness of soul, is discovered in that other emphatic record. “*And Saul eyed David from that day forward.*” (1 Samuel xviii. 9).

Ingratitude is hard to bear. Those for

whom we show the greatest kindness, will sometimes turn against us. It was thus that David suffered at the hands of Saul. But he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his duty—and this was worth much more than the thanks and gratitude of man.

We may all secure the same pleasant assurance for ourselves. More than this—we may gain the good will and blessing of a merciful and gracious God, “who is kind to the unthankful and the evil.”

Saul’s foolish jealousy drove David from the court—but the youth was greatly the gainer by it. He was thus early taught how little the blandishments of the world are to be esteemed; and amid the peaceful occupations of a shepherd, he had time to commune with God, and to prepare himself for the events of the unknown future.

We should be glad, of our own free will, to seek by occasional retirement from the busy scenes of life, to become better acquainted with ourselves, and to receive strength, in meditation and prayer, for sharper conflicts yet to be endured.

The portion of David’s history which has now occupied our thoughts, should teach us

to be bold in the service of God, and kind and forbearing in our intercourse with men. Like the brave shepherd boy, we who are soldiers of Christ, by union with His Church, have truth on our side; and in any contest with those who venture to assail the faith, we are sure of victory.

Be ye therefore strong, and very courageous; for we go forth in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel; and our hands are made mighty by the power of Jacob's God.

"The paw of the lion, the paw of the bear, the uncircumcised Philistine, in every case, needs strength. God alone can give the strength. God alone can give victory in every struggle with corruption, and in the final struggle with death. But if you will fight as followers of Christ, regarding Him as the Captain of your Salvation, and depending simply on the aid of His Spirit, you shall be made more than conquerors; the giants, one after another, shall fall before you, and the last enemy shall do the work of a friend, in consigning you to glory, and honor, and immortality."*

* "Golden Lectures," for 1855.—*James Paul, London.*

C O L L E C T .

O, Almighty God, the Supreme Governor of all things, whose power no creature is able to resist, to whom it belongeth justly to punish sinners, and to be merciful to those who truly repent; save and deliver us, we humbly beseech Thee, from the hands of our enemies; that we, being armed with Thy defence, may be preserved evermore from all perils, to glorify Thee, who art the only giver of all victory: through the merits of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

LECTURE III.

HE LOVED HIM AS HE LOVED HIS OWN SOUL.—1 Sam. xx. 17.

THE ancients gave Friendship a place among the virtues. This is probably estimating it too highly; but it must readily be allowed that it is sometimes a special *test* of virtue. There is scarcely anything upon earth more pleasant to behold, than pure, disinterested friendship.

“The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.”

Among all the examples of true friendship which have been recorded, none is so touching and beautiful as the affection which existed between David and Jonathan.

From the insight already gained into the character of the heroic shepherd boy, we are prepared to expect a warm attachment on his part, whenever a worthy object should call it

forth. David found such an object in the amiable and affectionate son of Saul.

The character of Jonathan presents an uncommon combination of manly strength and courage, and the gentleness and winning sweetness which belong more exclusively to woman.

“Dutiful to his father, he was faithful to his friend. Admitting his parent’s rights, he did not partake his passions. He gave to Saul, through all his fury, the obedience of a subject, and the reverence of a son. Still he is faithful to David,—true to him in danger,—loyal to him in distress,—protecting him with sleepless vigilance,—adhering to him with unabated love.”* It is worth our while to notice how the friendship between these two youths began.

On the memorable day when the Philistine giant was slain by the intrepid David, King Saul inquired of the Captain of the Host whose son the stripling was; and then, the inspired historian adds, that during the interview between Saul and David, “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

* Giles’ Lectures, p. 224.

Friendships rashly formed are apt to be short lived. In this case, however, we have an exception to the general rule.

It may be well supposed that there was some good reason which prompted Jonathan thus hastily to make the son of Jesse his dear and bosom friend. Some may, perhaps, suggest, that the valor which David had so lately shown, in his contest with Goliath, and the signal victory thus gained for Israel, had its influence in bringing about such a result. But it must be confessed, that while heroic deeds call forth astonishment and admiration, they are not calculated to move those tender affections which prepare the way for true friendship and love.

Instances are now and then to be met with, in which distinguished abilities and sterling worth are blended with modesty and unaffected simplicity. This freedom from conceit and arrogance, when combined with rare mental endowments and heroic achievements, presents a spectacle peculiarly lovely and engaging. Such was, no doubt, the powerful charm which fascinated the heart of Jonathan. The king's son had too noble a soul to undervalue merit, merely because its pos-

essor was poor, and of humble rank; and David had behaved so modestly, when another, of weaker mind, would have exhibited evidences of unseemly exultation, that Jonathan's affection was at once secured.

So much for the reason which best accounts for this sudden friendship. And now a few words should be added concerning its manifestation. True friendship consists in something besides smooth words and fair promises. It necessarily supposes *deeds*,—kind, considerate, unselfish *deeds*.

And thus we find that upon the first occasion of their meeting, Jonathan actually unrobed himself, that the youthful hero might not be wanting in suitable clothing and weapons.

A few days later, we read that Jonathan mildly, but seriously, expostulated with his jealous father, on account of his unnatural treatment of his friend; and so successfully did he support his cause, that David was reinstated in the royal favor.

And then, once more, when the fickle, heartless king, laid fresh snares for David's life, Jonathan, at the hazard of his own, warned the young man of his peril, and

pointed out a way of escape. Nor was this friendship all one-sided. David was quite as sincere and ardent in his attachment for Jonathan. Thus we read that when Saul's furious hatred rendered it impossible for David to tarry any longer in safety at the court, the two sworn friends parted with bitter tears. "They kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded." (1 Samuel, xx. 41). And, a long while after, when Jonathan was slain, the survivor, with crushed and bleeding heart, uttered the pathetic lamentation over the mangled corpse,—“I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman.” (2 Samuel, i. 26). And after a still longer period than this, when the dead had been buried, and by the many had been forgotten, the heart of true friendship kept that memory green, and David, now raised to kingly power, sought far and wide for Jonathan's outcast child; and when the poor lame youth was found, he pressed him to his generous breast, and said, “Fear not, for I will surely shew the kindness for Jonathan, thy father's sake, and will

restore thee all the land of Saul, thy [grand] father ; and thou shalt eat bread at my table, continually." (2 Samuel, ix. 7).

We all need friends. The world would be desolate enough without them. When we wish to describe one who is utterly forsaken and forlorn, we are wont to say, that "he has not a friend upon earth !"

It is in accordance with the promptings of nature, that we should seek for familiar friends. Social intercourse with the world at large, however pleasant and profitable it may be, does not satisfy the longings of the soul. We require a closer intimacy, more unre-served confidence ; a warmer affection, and a more tender sympathy, than mere society can give.

There are those who argue that it is wrong to make distinctions, and to show partiality in this way. They would have us love all the world alike. But this is simply impossible, and to insist upon the adoption of such a rule would have the effect of banishing real friendship from the earth. It is best to begin by cultivating an intimate affection towards those who are nearest to us, and then, gradually, the circle may be enlarged, until it em-

braces all who belong to the household of faith, and, finally, if you will, the whole family of man.

When the Bible commands us to love every body, it only means that we shall endeavor to feel well disposed towards all, and to be ready to assist them when we can.

Our blessed Saviour has set us an example in this respect. While no limit was placed to His benevolence, which included the whole guilty race He came to save, He had his particular favorites, and among the twelve Apostles, St. John, the youngest, and on some account the most attractive of them all, was called, by way of distinction, "*that disciple whom Jesus loved.*" So, then, we need feel no uneasiness because we cannot bring ourselves to do what no human being ever did,—to love all mankind alike. We should hate none, but we may very safely love some much more than others.*

* The religion of Christ has no sympathy with that mock philanthropy which declaims loudly about humanity and benevolence, and does nothing but declaim, which professes great love for men in general, but evinces no affection for any in particular, which thinks so much of promoting the welfare of the race, that it has no leisure to attend to the individual. Christian kindness is expan-

It was stated in a former lecture, that David was a type of Christ. We may discover some traces of this in the particular instances of true friendship and love, which have now engaged our thoughts. We have one Friend, who, according to the expressive language of Holy Writ, "sticketh closer than a brother," (Proverbs xviii. 24), even our DIVINE REDEEMER.

A parallel may be drawn (although a most imperfect one) between what He has done for us, and those acts of friendship so beautifully set forth in the story of David and Jonathan.

sive and far-reaching. It is not to be bounded by the limits of family or clique, or race, or class of society, or sect, or country. But then, instead of discouraging the more particular affections, in themselves innocent, it cherishes, purifies, and strengthens them. Every right and divinely inwrought impulse of the heart it adopts and hallows. Do the members of a Christian family love each other less, or are they less solicitous for each other's happiness, because they love Jesus more, and because their kindly sympathies go forth to their fellow-men of whatever condition or clime? And as of domestic love, so, also, genuine religion is the surest bond of friendship. Between those who are knit together in the ties of sanctified affection, there will exist a communion of holy feeling, a oneness of heart, that no mere earthly attachment can produce.—*Discourses on the Life of St. John, by Bishop Lee, of Delaware.*

Did Saul's gentle and generous-minded son strip himself of his robes of honor, and put them upon David, as an evidence of his affection and regard?

So did our blessed Saviour lay aside that glory which He had from the beginning, with the FATHER; and although there was no heaven-born courage, or any goodness found in us to attract His notice, He clothed us with the robe of righteousness, and exalted us to the lofty dignity of being called the sons of God.

He left His radiant throne on high,
Left the bright realms of bliss,
And came to earth to bleed and die!
Was ever love like this?

We noticed, also, how, at the very commencement of their friendship, which they bound themselves by a solemn compact, should be a lasting one, Jonathan armed David with his sword and his bow, that he might be fully equipped for battle. In like manner, when at our Baptism and Confirmation, we enter into a formal agreement with our Lord Jesus Christ, He puts upon us "the whole armor of God," that we may be able to stand against the deceitful arts of the devil.

Again, we read, that while David, cold, and hungry, and heart-sick, and weary, wandered about in the dreary wilderness, by reason of the hatred of Saul, the kind and faithful Jonathan sought out his friend in "the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." (1 Samuel xxiii. 15-16).

Has not JESUS been such a friend to us; a near, and dear, and considerate, and compassionate, and sustaining friend, in our deepest perplexities and troubles?

Once more: the example of David in taking so much pains to show his gratitude to Jonathan, by kindness to the poor lame boy, Mephibosheth, should remind us, that while our best friend, even our Lord and Master, is no longer in the world, and we cannot do any thing for Him, in His own Person, His suffering children are always with us here. O, do for them, as David did for the son of Jonathan. Help them in their poverty. Clothe their nakedness. Satisfy the cravings of hunger. Give freely of some of the overflowing bounties which your ALMIGHTY FRIEND has confided to your care. If spirits in Paradise knew aught of what is done in this world of sin, Jonathan may have looked back, with

glistening and grateful eyes, when David, his faithful friend, showed kindness to his son.

The Saviour will say to those, at the last and awful day, who have been charitable to His poor, "*Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto Me.*"

COLLECT.

O God, who hast prepared for those who love THEE such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

LECTURE IV.

AND HE CHANGED HIS BEHAVIOR, AND FEIGNED HIMSELF MAD.—1 Samuel xxi. 13.

IT will be remembered, by those familiar with the history, that among the liberal offers which Saul had made, in case any one should be bold and successful enough to slay the Philistine giant was this : that the king would give to the victor the hand of his daughter in marriage.

David having performed the deed of valor, might now justly claim the expected reward. But even while professing to bestow *favor*, the jealous and vindictive Saul was plotting *mischief* in his heart. Accordingly, under the plausible pretext of stimulating the young hero to gain other glorious triumphs in Israel's behalf, he tempts him to go forth against the Philistines once more, saying, that upon his return as a victor, his eldest daughter should be his wife.

Saul, meanwhile, fondly hoped that some more successful giant might crush the aspiring stripling beneath his powerful arm. The young soldier added fresh glory to his name, and fulfilled the hard condition which had been prescribed; but only to find himself disappointed and deceived; for Saul bestowed his daughter upon a more favored suitor.—(1 Samuel xviii. 19.)

But why detail the petty annoyances to which David was so constantly exposed. If I should pursue the plan commonly adopted by biographers, everything discreditable to the character of the hero would be carefully suppressed, and none but his good deeds made known. But I shall assume the higher and nobler ground which the inspired penmen have adopted, to tell the whole truth, and if David does wrong, let him bear the odium thereof. After becoming son-in-law to Saul, by marrying his younger daughter, David was made the victim of all the plots and dishonorable schemes which the evil minded king could possibly contrive; and finally, as the only chance of safety, fled stealthily from the court and continued in exile until the death of his implacable enemy. This trial, however,

did David good. Uninterrupted sunshine and prosperity for any long period are dangerous to us all. It is only "tribulation which worketh patience, and patience, experience;" and if God has not given up all hope of making us better, He will find means for subduing our pride, and perfecting our character in some way.

David sought first for Ahimelech, the priest, and with a pitiable falsehood upon his tongue, pretended that he had been sent on secret business by the king; and having eaten up the hallowed bread, which, for one in his starving state, was all well enough,* he per-

* The tabernacle being at Nob, David repaired thither in his confusion and distress, both to take an affectionate leave of the house of God, which he despaired of seeing again for a long time, and also to obtain succor. He asks Ahimelech, the priest, whether he can give him any food for his hunger, or weapon for his defence. With regard to the former of these, Ahimelech told him he had nothing under his hand but the sacred loaves. These, however, he gave him; and our Saviour fully justifies the action: "Have ye never read what David did when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?"—(St. Mark ii. 25-6.) Teaching

suaded the old man to give him Goliath's sword, then hanging up as a trophy, "behind the Ephod; and, with conscience stinging and

us, that the ceremonies of religion are to give place to the substance; that positive institutions are to yield to moral obligations; that God requireth mercy and not sacrifice.

With regard to the latter, Ahimelech told him that he had nothing but the sword of Goliath, which was wrapped in a cloth behind the Ephod. What a curiosity was here! How highly it was prized we may learn from the preservation of it in such a place, and with such care! Nothing could have been more welcome to David than this weapon. "Give it me," says he, "there is none like it." It had been drawn against himself, and had been taken by his own hand; no one therefore, seemed to have a greater title to it than David. It would strengthen his faith more than his arm. It would call to remembrance his former victory, and encourage afresh his confidence in God.—(*Jay's Evening Exercises*, for February 4th.)

The explanation of one difficulty sometimes opens our eyes to another. It will be observed that our Saviour says of this transaction, that it took place "in the days of *Abiathar*, the high priest," rather than of Ahimelech, his father. Abiathar was better known than Ahimelech, and this is probably the reason why St. Mark refers to him. "The son of the high priest was regarded as his successor, and was often associated with him in the duties of his office. It was not improper, therefore, to designate him as high priest, even during the life of his father, especially as that was the name by which he was afterwards known. *Abiathar*, moreover, in the calamitous times when David came to the throne, left the interest of Saul, and fled to

torturing him to the quick, he fled that day for fear of Saul."

Shame on thee, O favored man of God, who, having once bravely confronted the giant to the teeth, armed only with a sling, now skulkest away as a coward, before the crazy king, even when armed, thyself, with Goliath's powerful sword.

Wrong-doing makes cowards of the bravest and the best. Think not, my friends, that the tongue can be allowed to lie and swear, and bad passions be let loose, and the heart not flutter, and the knees tremble, when danger and death draw near.

Perhaps, scarce knowing what he did, David next "went to Achish, the King of Gath"—(1 Samuel xxi. 10,)—a dangerous and deceitful foe; and when, from secret whisperings about the court, he perceived that some fresh mischief was brewing here—(and good reason why; for had not David humbled the champion of Gath to the very dust?)—the unhappy

David, bringing with him the Ephod, one of the peculiar garments of the high priest. For a long time during David's reign he was high priest, and it became natural therefore to associate *his* name with that of David; to speak of David as king, and Abiathar the high priest of his time."—(*Barnes' Notes on Gospels*, vol. i. p. 357.)

man, reduced to the greatest straits, pretended that he was mad; and he, the glorious victor, over whose prowess the dark-eyed maidens of Israel had chanted their loudest songs of rejoicing; he, the son-in-law of Saul, like a poor idiot, “scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.”

Beware, you who have once experienced a lively hope of sins forgiven, through the Saviour's atoning blood; O beware how you fall off into evil ways, expecting to find a welcome with the enemy—that foul and treacherous fiend, whose service you professed to leave, and whose fierceness you have exasperated tenfold, by having once abandoned his cause. The Evil One may pretend gladly to receive you back, but his bitterness and spite will cause you to taste a double portion of the torments stored up in his dark domains.

David, once more a fugitive, took refuge in a cave—a dark, subterranean retreat—and there, a band of four hundred men, who, from various causes, had withdrawn themselves from public view, chose him for their captain. One might almost pluck a leaf from

the Arabian Nights, to illustrate this romantic part of David's history.*

The unhappy youth seemed now to have come to repentance and a better mind—for, on two separate occasions, he spared Saul's life, when he found him fast asleep, and wholly in his power; thus showing that he could forgive the injuries done to him by his fellow-men, even as he hoped that God would overlook his own.

* The country of Judea, being mountainous and rocky, is full of CAVERNS, to which the inhabitants were accustomed to flee for shelter from the incursions of their enemies.—(Josh. x. 16; Judg. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6, xiv. 11). Some of these caves were very capacious; that of ADULLAM afforded an asylum to David and four hundred men, including his family, who resorted thither to him.—(1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2). The cave of ENGEDI was so large, that David and six hundred men concealed themselves in its sides; and Saul entered the mouth of the cave without perceiving that any one was there. At first it appears neither lofty nor spacious, but a low passage on the left leads into apartments where a party could easily remain concealed from those without. The face of the hill around corresponds to the description, *he came to the rocks of the wild goats*.—(1 Sam. xxiv. 2.) See *Carnes' Letters*, p. 307; *Horne's Introduction*, vol. II. p. 32. Also *Bishop Pocock's Travels*, vol. II. pt. i. p. 41; *Robinson's Biblical Researches*, vol. I. p. 498; and *Wainwright's Pathways of our Blessed Lord*, p. 111.

With his returning sense of obligation to his Heavenly Father, the Divine love and favor are manifested once more towards him; and David was accordingly commissioned to go and save the inhabitants of Keilah from a threatened assault of the Philistines. Again the courage of the youthful champion returns, and again he is crowned with victory.

If you take this history in detail, (as time forbids our doing here,) and accompany the persecuted exile, from step to step, “you will find each single fault followed by a separate infliction; each return of duty and piety recompensed by a boon of mercy. He parted from Jonathan in prayer, and he is led to the house of the High Priest for consolation; he tampers then with deceit, and has ever after to reproach himself with the death, though the unintentional one, of the whole family of Ahimelech.—(1 Samuel xxii. 18.) He faithlessly flees now to Achish, the Philistine, and he is driven thence as an idiot or a lunatic. He next fulfils the duty of a son, and provides for the safety of his father’s household; and immediately the prophet Gad is sent to offer him the consolations of the Lord, and guide him to safety. And thus on, from pas-

sage to passage, every act of unbelief, every disobedience, brings down retributive punishment; every return of piety, retributive blessing.”*

There is no safety nor happiness in the ways of sin. Things may seem to go well and prosperously with the wrong-doer, but it can only be for a season. “Be sure your sin will find you out.”—(Numbers xxxii. 23.) We are distinctly told, that God “will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality—eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but follow unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”—(Romans ii. 6–9.)

It is a very natural question to ask, why it was, after David had promised so fairly, and behaved so well, that he afterwards did so badly? How could the hero who slew Goliath, be transformed into the coward who fled from Saul?

The reason was, that faith had become weak, and he distrusted God.

* Fleury's *Life of David*, p. 96.

If we will take the pains to examine our own hearts, we shall find, that sometimes, we are wide awake to our responsibilities, and most anxious to do all that we can to serve and please our Heavenly Father. Prayer and praise, and attendance upon the service and ordinances of God's house, are delightful to us. Then, again, there will follow a season of coldness and indifference—our lagging energies scarcely sufficient to prevent our coming to an actual stand-still; something like the languor and debility felt at first under the murky atmosphere of spring, after the bracing air of winter has been heated by the scorching sun.*

David has described this ebb and flow of his inner life, in different portions of the Psalms. Indeed, the whole Psalter may be regarded as a sort of *thermometer*, by which to measure the rise and fall of the better feelings of the soul. At one time we hear him exclaim, in tones of lamentation and self-abasement, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." (Psalm cxix. 25.) At another, as if a heavy

* To those unacquainted with it, the writer recommends a little book, by the Rev. Erskine Neale, entitled, *The Summer and Winter of the Soul*.

•

weight had been lifted from his shoulders, and it was a real pleasure to do God's will, he says, with a tone of grateful satisfaction, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep Thy commandments."—(Psalm cxix. 60.)

The truth is, there is a leaven of inbred corruption within us, which only requires favorable times and circumstances to develop and enlarge. Our evil nature, which is "very far gone from original righteousness," (Article IX.,) cannot be *suddenly* changed; and we need never hope, in this world, that it will be *fully* restored to primeval innocence.

Sometimes, indeed, through the abundant mercy of God, the growth and ripeness of years have been acquired in a brief space—but this is by no means the usual course. Sin clings to us with a strong and stubborn hold; and God teaches us, in our life-long struggle to subdue it, that we cannot be inactive, if we would effectually work out our salvation.

These considerations give us a clew to some things in David's case, which make his character appear to the unreflecting so full of strange inconsistencies. He was mortal, like

ourselves, and the evidences of a fallen nature in *him*, as in *all* others, must now and then appear.

David found, by sad experience, how vain it was to rely upon himself. He had done wrong, and notwithstanding the ingenuity he showed in hiding in places which promised security, and the various deceits he practised to win the favor of such as were able to help, he was neither safe nor happy. He had proved himself undeserving of God's protection and love, and had thus been deprived of every real ground of hope.

To some of you, my friends, we might appropriately address the Apostle's words, and say, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?" (Galatians, v. 7.) Whatever the cause may be, which is drawing you aside from the way of duty, O, be sure that you watch against it, and through the grace of God, overcome it. We would not have you wander in the gloomy wilderness of uncertainty, nor starve upon the dry husks of worldliness, as the son of Jesse wandered, and hungered, but we pray God that you may experience all your lives long what *he* experienced when hearty con-

trition had brought him back from his evil ways,—the loving kindness of HIM, which is better than life, even “the sure mercies of David.”

COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who showest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of CHRIST's religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

LECTURE V.

NOW THERE WAS A LONG WAR BETWEEN THE HOUSE OF SAUL AND THE HOUSE OF DAVID; BUT DAVID WAXED STRONGER AND STRONGER, AND THE HOUSE OF SAUL WAXED WEAKER AND WEAKER.—2 Samuel iii. 1.

WE noticed, in a former lecture, with what generous forbearance David conducted himself, when the vindictive Saul was quite within his power. He knew full well, indeed, that he could hope for neither peace nor safety until his enemy was dead, but he was too conscientious, and had too many of the better feelings of a man, to permit him to lift his hand against Israel's anointed king. How beautiful are such instances as this, of the power of Divine grace in the heart! David inherits "the prompt faith and magnanimity of Abraham; he is simple as Isaac; he is humble as Jacob; he has the youthful wisdom and self-possession, the tenderness, the affectionateness, and the firmness, of Joseph. Be it our

blessedness so to acquit ourselves in troubled times ; cheerful amid anxieties, collected in dangers, generous towards enemies, patient in pain and sorrow, subdued in good fortune."*

And it would be well for us all, when disposed to rise up in just indignation against those who have done us wrong, to be willing, with the patience of faith, to leave our cause in the hands of HIM who has solemnly declared, " Vengeance is MINE ; I will repay, saith the Lord.—(Romans xii. 19.)

Poor, mad, forsaken Saul, came to a wretched end.† His death was that of des-

* Newman's Parochial Sermons, vol. i. p. 482.

† God gave up Saul, and the difference was manifest : the evil spirit occupied him at once. Rage, fury, unnatural hatred took up their silent dominion in the dark bosom of the king. Then came the stage of superstition. The large-minded infidel became narrowed to the small compass of the superstitious, and he for whom God and His Church were not wide enough, satisfies himself with the Witch of Endor. He who found the priesthood too confined a means to attain his end, and the sacrifices too formal, bowed before an incantation, and shivered before a ghost. Superstition is the end of the infidel. The only truly wide minded man is he whose thought and soul are limited by the Word and Will of God.—*Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. i. p. 475.

pair and suicide. In another battle with his old enemies, the Philistines, the tide of success set strongly against him, and he sought, in voluntary destruction, a relief from the grievous torture of his wounds, and the stinging mortification of defeat.—(1 Samuel xxxi. 1–6.)

Suicide is a most cowardly and disgraceful way of putting an end to earthly troubles. I say *earthly* troubles, but there will be other troubles, indescribably worse, in another world.

No one who begins a course of sin can feel perfectly sure (as much as he now abhors the idea), that in some moment of desperation he may not be guilty of the horrible offence of suicide. The tendencies of evil doing are downwards, and if obstinately persisted in, the deep and yawning abyss of destruction must inevitably be reached. “No gambler, no adulterer, no restless voluptuary, no man who drains life of the last dregs of pleasure, can ever say that his own existence is secure from the fierceness of his passions. It is a lowered and chastened heart which makes a man respect and guard his own life; a belief that whether he is a beggar or a prince,

whether he is tried by the good, or tried by the evil of life, it is his duty to remain till the great JUDGE bids him depart.”*

No sooner was Saul dead, than a messenger hurried from the battle-field to announce the news to David, thinking that because the king had been his worst enemy, the young man would, of course, be glad ; and, perhaps, give him a handsome reward. So sure did he feel of receiving David’s warmest thanks, that he even pretended that he had killed Saul himself, although, as we have seen before, the unfortunate monarch had fallen by his own hand.

Little did this foolish messenger know of the character of him upon whom he thus attempted to practice a gross deceit. David had no selfish wish to exalt himself, and when he saw before him one who, by his own confession, had slain his lawful king, he ordered him to be executed without delay.

Some may be disposed to question David’s sincerity when he rent his clothes, and grieved so much at the death of Saul ; but after we have learned to practice the same noble

* Sidney Smith’s Sermons, (Carey & Hart’s edit.) p. 234.

spirit of forgiveness and forgetfulness of the past, we shall, perhaps, be better prepared to appreciate and decide upon his motives.—(2 Samuel i. 17–27.)

And now the time had fully come when the son of Jesse, who had quietly suffered so many wrongs, was to be exalted to the throne.

Long years had passed since that strange visit of the prophet to his father's house, when the anointing oil was poured upon the head of the unambitious shepherd boy. Old Samuel was sleeping quietly in his grave; but still his words were all fulfilled, and the influences of God's spirit, of which the outward sign had been the fitting emblem, had been preparing the mind and heart of David for the great responsibility at last to be assumed. At the age of thirty years, David was recognized as king.*

* David, after his deliverance from Saul, and his victories over all his enemies round about him, in Psalm xxx. 7–8, confesses that this prosperity had raised him to such a pitch of confidence, as to make him say, "that he should never be moved; God of His favor had made his hill so strong;" but presently he adds, almost in the very same breath, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The sun shines in his full brightness but

There is a feeling something akin to envy, which is apt to come over us, as we read the lives of God's ancient worthies, and we can scarcely suppress a plain expression of the wish, "O, that our lot might be as exalted and glorious as theirs!"

David was indeed a great man, with all the pomp, and honor, and power belonging to a king. But the destiny of every true child of God is in no respect inferior to his.

Has not the sure word of promise been given, that those who persevere unto the end, shall be "made kings and priests unto God," (Revelation v. 10,) and shall sit upon thrones of glory, and wear crowns of gold, and be safe and happy for ever in his eternal kingdom?

But then you may object that we must wait a long time for this. True: and did not David wait long, too, before he reached the *earthly* dignity which brought so much vexation and trouble with it; and shall we regard the very moment before he passes under a cloud. Who knows what a day, what an hour, nay, what a minute may bring forth? He who builds upon the present, builds upon the narrow compass of a point; and where the foundation is so narrow, the superstructure cannot be high and strong too."—(*South's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 134.)

it as a hard condition to be obliged to do the same, for blessedness without alloy and without end?

The first act of the young king, when he firmly grasped the sceptre, was one of genuine kindness and godly love.

The men of Jabesh-Gilead, as it seems, with a noble and considerate care, had taken the mangled remains of Saul and Jonathan from the Philistines, and buried them with becoming honor.

David no sooner heard of this, than he sent messengers to these men, with warmest expressions of his approbation, and with the promise of a suitable reward.—(2 Samuel ii. 1–7.)

Although the young king had succeeded to the throne of Saul, it was not without a hard struggle that he kept possession of his lawful rights. Some of the Israelites still held fast to the tottering dynasty of the unfortunate monarch, and desired to give the crown to one of the sons of Saul. A long war broke out in consequence, which lasted until the last aspirant to the throne having been murdered by two of his own captains, all the tribes came to Hebron, and united in the solemn act of anointing David as their king.

After living at Hebron for seven years and a half, David determined to build a city which should be the capitol of the kingdom, and the seat of religion. "There stood on the borders of Judah and Benjamin a strong fortress, which had remained in the possession of the native inhabitants, the Jebuzites, since the conquest of Canaan. The natural strength and long security of the citadel tempted the Jebuzites to treat a summons to surrender with insolent defiance. David, however, took both the town and citadel, which stood on Mount Sion, and there established his royal residence. The situation of Jerusalem is remarkably imposing : it stands on several eminences of unequal heights, some parts of which slope gradually, on others the sides are abrupt and precipitous. All around, excepting in the north, run deep ravines or valleys, like intrenchments formed by nature, beyond which arise mountains of greater height, which encircle and seem to protect the city. It is open only to the north, as if the way had been levelled, for the multitudes from the rest of the tribes to arrive at the holy city without difficulty or obstacle. The hill of Sion, on which David's city stood, rose to the south ;

it was divided by a deep and narrow ravine from the other hills, over which the city gradually spread.”*

I shall not trace in detail the bloody records of the past; but rather draw from the simple statement of the text, such spiritual improvement as may be of service to ourselves. “Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.”

David may here be regarded as the representative of God’s faithful people, and Saul and his adherents, as the infatuated ones who presume, in their weakness, to withstand the power of the Omnipotent. A constant struggle is going on between good and evil. We may adopt the very language of the text, and speak of it as a *war*.

There is a contest with our own evil passions besides the danger which assail us from every side. When we really wish to do good, evil is often present with us.

“Temptation without, and corruption within;
E’en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.”

* Milman’s History of the Jews, vol i. p. 190.

We may also say of this struggle between good and evil, as the sacred historian has said of the contest between David and the descendants of Saul, "the war was *long*."

Literally, in David's case, it was but seven years and six months that his peace was thus disturbed; while, with every true Christian, the war continues, with more or less fierceness all his life. We are told at our baptism to fight manfully under the banner of the cross, even unto the end.

As sure as we persuade ourselves that the danger is past, and that the flesh is thoroughly subdued to the Spirit; and that we can no longer be made the victims of temptation as in times past; and that we need not watch so vigilantly, and that the heavy armor may be safely laid aside, so surely will it happen that we shall be overtaken unawares, and our old enemy will come back, more fierce and bloodthirsty than before.

Again: it is stated in the text that "the house of David waxed stronger and stronger."

This must needs be the case with all who follow the commandments of God with sincerity of heart. Every successful resistance of evil will render us the better able to with-

stand it again. Our spiritual strength, like vigor of body, will be daily increased by use.

Nor is this our only consideration. Whenever we show a disposition to do right, God, of his mercy, will help our weak endeavors, and crown them with success. His grace will be abundantly bestowed.

Each time that we receive the Holy Communion in penitence and faith, we go forth with braver hearts and stronger hands to do battle with the world.

Once more:—following the course of the narrative in the text, we are told that “the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.” Thus do the powers of darkness withdraw themselves, with reluctant and retreating steps, before the advancing triumphs of the truth.

What is true of each individual Christian, is also true, in a much greater degree, of the whole body of God’s believing people. His universal kingdom must go on conquering and to conquer; and no earthly power can let or hinder it.

Christ’s religion is something more than a philosophy, or a creed. It is an *imperial power*, irresistible in its might and dominion;

and everything which stands in its way will certainly be destroyed.

Has not this kingdom spread far and wide, in spite of all opposition? And have not all who have ventured to come in its way been growing "weaker and weaker," like the adherents of Saul, in the long war with David?

Is not this kingdom of God gaining its triumphs by righteousness and mercy, and by overcoming the spirit of the world—its pride, and luxury, and irreverence, and cruelty, and profaneness? Can there be any doubt as to the final issue of such a contest?

Let it be our daily prayer, going not forth from feigned lips, that the Lord God may be with us, as He was with our fathers; and that He may incline our hearts to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments.

P R A Y E R .

O, Almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the chief corner-stone; grant that the comfortable Gospel of Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed, in all places, to the breaking down the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death; till at length the whole of THY dispersed sheep, being gathered into one fold, shall become partakers of everlasting life; through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

LECTURE VI.

SO DAVID, AND ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, BROUGHT UP THE ARK OF THE LORD WITH SHOUTING, AND WITH THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET.—2 Samuel vi. 15.

KINGS and rulers show their wisdom, by the public respect which they pay to the duties of religion.

Merely upon the low ground of *policy*, obedience to the laws of God has sometimes been encouraged, as securing a prompt conformity to those of human appointment.

Still more wise and praiseworthy are those who, having as private individuals adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour, carry their habits of reverence and devotion into the higher sphere of usefulness to which they have been called.

It is gratifying to observe, in the case of David, that he continued to serve God as sincerely and as truly, when seated on the throne of Israel, as when a friendless youth,

whose pathway was thickly beset with troubles and dangers.

We have ample proof of this in the becoming care he showed for the Ark of God.

The Philistines, after one of their victories, had carried this holy treasure away in triumph; but finding that it brought a continual curse upon their land, they gladly sent it back. The kingdom of Israel, however, had been in such an unsettled state, that no suitable provision had been made for the preservation of the Ark, and it had now been left for some time at Kirjath-Jearim, (about nine miles from Jerusalem,) in great obscurity and neglect.

Soon after David came to the throne, he made arrangements for a grand public celebration, in order to bring it up to the royal city, on Mount Sion. We find a distinct reference to this in the one hundred and thirty-second Psalm: "Lord, remember David, and all his trouble; how he swore unto the Lord, and vowed a vow unto the Almighty God of Jacob: I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house, nor climb up into my bed; I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber; neither the temples of my head to take

any rest, until I find out a place for the temple of the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”* He could not be satisfied to be dwelling in “a house of cedars,” in ease and splendor, while the Ark of God had no permanent abiding place.

“Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata, (so the Psalm continues,) and found it in the wood.”

The author of the Plain Commentary, remarks upon this: “David, and his father, and his brethren, while they dwelt at Bethlehem Ephratah, had heard of the Ark as being in the tabernacle at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim; but when the time came for Israel and their king to seek for it again, they found it not at Shiloh, but in the forest near Baalah of Judah, which is called Kirjath-Jearim, the city of the wood; and from thence they brought it to Sion, its new abiding place, from whence it was no more to remove. Even so has the Church heard the glad tidings of the true Ark, the Incarnate Saviour, at Bethlehem, with the shepherds, on Christmas-day, and has found Him on Good-Friday, nailed

* Verses from *one* to *five*, included. See remarks on these in Bishop Horne’s beautiful Commentary on the Psalms, p. 487.

the wood of the bitter tree; but now knows Him to be abiding in the Jerusalem above, on the throne of eternal glory."

But to resume the thread of the narrative. David gathered together thirty thousand chosen men, and attended by this vast assemblage, and amid the sound of harp and psaltry, and all kinds of sacred music, he went before the Ark of God, with raiment of fine linen, and "with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet."—(2 Sam. vi. 15.)

I have seen the lip of scorn and contempt upturned at some of the solemn ceremonials of religion—such as the laying of the cornerstone of a church, or the still more imposing service at its consecration; but the Bible contains examples enough to show, that while such outward observances are calculated to make a deep impression upon the minds and hearts of the beholders, they are highly acceptable unto God.

But David, with all his anxiety to do what reason and religion might suggest, made some grievous mistakes.

According to the requirements of the law, the Ark was never to be removed, except upon the shoulders of the priests. The king, however, had either forgotten this, or thought

it a matter of no importance, and accordingly he had it placed upon a cart, drawn by oxen, as was customary in carrying heathen idols, from one part of the country to another. In passing along the rough and uneven road, the Ark was shaken, and Uzzah, one of those who drove the cart, put forth his hand to steady it in its place.

It was high time that the Israelites should be reminded that the God who had brought them out of Egypt, was not like unto senseless deities made with hands; and the presumptuous man, who, being unconsecrated to the priestly office, had ventured to touch the Ark, (even with good intentions,) was struck dead upon the spot.—(2 Samuel vi. 7.)

God will not hold those guiltless who meddle with sacred things with which they have no concern. The priest has his own duties to perform, and the people have theirs. Let none venture where they do not properly belong. Those who are accustomed to be indiscreetly rash, would do well to remember Uzzah.*

* The judicious Hooker, in referring to this passage and others of a kindred nature, observes: "It behoveth generally all sorts of men to keep themselves within the limits

It is not uncommon for men to be willing to serve God, provided they can do it in their way, and according to their own caprices. Some will not be satisfied without a modification of the faith which has been handed down unchanged from the earliest times;—and others insist that services and ceremonies made sacred by long association, shall give place to the bold and unimpressive form of modern contrivance. But the Almighty would have all to hold fast the same creed, and to worship Him in the beauty of holiness. He never calls any to adopt an imperfect creed, or to take up with systems which are exposed to constant uncertainty and

of their own vocation. And seeing God, from whom men's several degrees and pre-eminences do proceed, hath appointed them in this church, at whose hands His pleasure is that we should receive baptism and all other public medicinable helps of soul, perhaps thereby the more to settle our hearts in the love of our ghostly superiors, they have small cause to hope that with Him their voluntary services will be accepted who thrust themselves into functions either above their capacity or besides their place, and over boldly intermeddle with duties whereof no charge was ever given them. They that in anything exceed the compass of their own order, do as much as in them lieth to dissolve that order which is the harmony of God's kingdom."—(*Ecclesiastical Policy*, Book v. ch. lxii. s. 13.)

change. But not a few are highly offended to be thus kept under wholesome restraint. Even David, on the occasion of the death of Uzzah, was displeased because the Lord had thus openly manifested His "indignation," and he was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?"

Indeed, so great was his mortification and alarm, that the public ceremonial was interrupted, and instead of carrying up the Ark to the capital, the procession turned aside, and left it in "the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite."

For the space of three months the Ark continued in this place. Obed-Edom, it appears, prized the privilege thus unexpectedly vouchsafed, and the reverence which he showed for the sacred treasure brought a rich blessing with it. "The Lord blessed Obed-Edom, and all his household."—(2 Samuel vi. 11.)

Health, and honor, and prosperity were showered down on those who manifested their love for God, by respect for the symbol of His glorious presence.

"Godliness hath the promise of the life

that now is," as well as of the enduring blessedness of that which is to come. One evidence of godliness is a proper respect for holy places, and holy things. O, that every Christian heart may glow with such zeal and warmth for all that concerns the kingdom of our Lord, that none can look upon his holy temple, even while moving about in worldly business, from day to day, without an expression of the Psalmist's earnest desire: "Peace be within thy walls. For my brethren and companion's sake, I will wish thee prosperity!"—(1 Samuel cxxii. 7–8.)

It is a real privilege, in more ways than one, to live close by the Church, and although we may not, like Obed-Edom, carry to our homes the Ark of the *Lord*, we may always keep there the Ark of *mercy*,—the covenant of salvation, revealed in the glorious Gospel of the Son of God.

The temporary sojourn of the Ark beneath the roof of the humble Jew, secured so many signal blessings to the family, that the strange tidings reached the ears of David, and again he determined to carry out his former plan of setting up the Ark in the royal city.

Before leaving this point in the history, it

may be proper to mention, that a long time after the events of which we are speaking, Obed-Edom and his sons received an honorable appointment in the temple;—a fact which leads us to believe that they continued steadfast unto the end.—(1 Chronicles xv. 18–21.)

The fears and scruples of the king being completely removed, he “brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.”

All things were done decently and in order. David had got over his foolish conceit: that an outward attention to the proprieties of religious service did not matter much; and the Ark was borne in due form upon the shoulders of the priests, arrayed in their robes of office, and at the very outset of the triumphal march, as if in atonement for former irregularity and error, a burnt sacrifice was solemnly offered.

Whenever in the first beginnings of a godly life we feel that we are too vile and polluted to accept the gracious offer of our Lord; “If a man love ME, my FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (St. John xiv. 23,) and we

are ready to say with the centurion, "I am not worthy that THOU shouldest come under my roof," we can sympathize with David, when he was afraid to receive the sacred Ark within the gates of Jerusalem. But afterwards, perfect love having cast out all slavish fear, the Divine Presence will be welcomed to our hearts and homes, with warmest thanksgivings, and with the voice of praise.

"And they brought in the Ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it, and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord."—(2 Samuel vi. 17.)*

When the grand pageant was thus happily ended, the king, with his accustomed liberality, provided the people with ample supplies for joyous festivities at their homes, and then, although he must have been wearied with the excitement and exercises of the day, he "returned to bless his household."

No doubt those high in authority have sometimes joined with heartless formality in the public ceremonials, to which time-honored

* "DAVID A CHURCHMAN," in Dr. Lay's admirable "Tracts for Missionary use," (vol. ii. p. 489,) is well worth reading.

custom has obliged them, reluctantly, to conform; but when he privately engages in the duties of religion his sincerity can no longer be questioned.

David wished to set a becoming example to his family, and he was most anxious that all who looked up to him as husband, or father, or lord, might learn to love and obey the GREAT BEING who had so graciously crowned his days with mercy and loving-kindness. Will not every head of a family strive faithfully to "bless his household," as David did, by religious instruction and prayer?

But with all the satisfaction which the king of Israel must have then enjoyed, there was one serious drawback to his peace,—and that from a quarter which you might least suspect. His own wife, the daughter of Saul, and a worthy descendant of that bad stock,—made light of the appearance of devotion which David had that day exhibited; for she had watched him from a window, with evil eyes, as the joyful procession moved along; Asaph and his brethren uniting in the triumphal chant, while the king, in holiday attire, led the sacred band.

Scarcely waiting until he had reached the

sheltered privacy of home, she exclaimed, in sarcastic tone and words, "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day!" Nay, she even compared him with the debauched and shameless profligates, who glory in the exposure of their vileness and pollution to the world.

The same woman who had conceived a passionate love for David when she saw him first, flushed with victory, with the head of the Philistine in his hand, now expressed undisguised contempt for him, because he yielded to the impulses of earnest devotion, and paid public honor to the Lord, in a way which she chose to regard as unbecoming in the hero and the king.* Her punishment was significant. She was childless, and that because she *despised* David. Her fall and her signal punishment enforce the direction of the Apostle, "Let the wife see that she *reverence* her husband."—(Ephesians v. 33.)

David's language, in answer to Michal's

* The Jews considered it a part of their religious duties to join in the dance, with tabret and harp.—(Psalm cxlix. 3.) It was in accordance with this custom, that David danced before the Ark.—(1 Chron. xv. 29, and 2 Sam. vi. 14.) This mode of worship was probably borrowed from the Egyptians. (See *Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i. p. 140.)

reproachful words, was decided, and yet not improperly severe. He pleaded in excuse that his zeal, which had excited her displeasure, had been exhibited before the Lord who had exalted him to honor, and he declared his settled purpose to show still deeper humiliation and gratitude in time to come; in spite of the opinion of the world.

Archbishop Leighton, with sweet quaintness, enforces the lesson which this portion of the history should teach:—"It is no matter though the profane world (which so hates God that it cannot endure his image), do mock and revile; it is thy honor to be, as David said, (2 Samuel vi. 22,) thus *more vile*, in growing still more like unto him in holiness. What though the polite man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise; it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness which he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it. He knows not God, and therefore doth not discern and esteem what is most like Him. When courtiers come down into the country, the common home-bred people possibly think their habit strange, but they care not for that,—it is the fashion at court. What need, then, that the

godly should be so tender foreheaded, as to be put out of countenance, because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? It is the fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of Kings himself." *

COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which Thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

* Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter, chap. i, v. 16.

LECTURE VII.

THUS SAITH THE LORD, BEHOLD I WILL RAISE UP EVIL AGAINST THEE OUT OF THINE OWN HOUSE.—2 Samuel xii. 11.

THE points in David's history which we have had occasion, thus far, to notice, have been, for the most part, pleasant to dwell upon. We have seen David as a heroic lad, the faithful friend, the gentle and forgiving man, the humble and devout believer, the good and righteous king, but, alas, for human nature, truth obliges us now to hold up a very different picture, and one in which it is difficult to recognize the character we have seen before,—*David, the adulterer and the murderer!*

While endeavoring to deal faithfully with this subject, God grant that no unbecoming "*sharpness*" (2 Corinth. xiii. 10), may be used, and that even just indignation may be tempered with mercy. Great and shocking

crimes are the result of much previous preparation, in the shape of unrestrained evil thoughts and debasing influences. Few are found to commit them from sudden impulse. Some secret cause must have been doing its silent work, to have changed that David whom we have lately seen so devout and godly, into the man whose horrible wickedness now makes us shudder. Neither is this cause unknown.

It was nothing more nor less than idleness and luxurious living, which opened his heart for the entrance of corruption and sin.

David had been chosen in Saul's stead, that Israel might have a notable champion to maintain its rights; but instead of leading the army, as usual, in making assaults upon idolatrous nations, he left his captains to do the best they could without him, while he reposed at the palace in inglorious ease.

Let us never esteem it a hardship that our time is fully occupied with daily labor, for this is a merciful provision to save us from temptation and ruin. Idleness is the mother of vice. Those who venture to spend their precious hours in the lap of ease and self-indulgence, will be found, sooner or later, doing the devil's work, and receiving his wages.

The enervating effects of luxury accomplished David's fall. "At the time that kings go forth to battle, (says the sacred writer,) David sent Joab, and all his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon; and besieged Rabbah; but David tarried still in Jerusalem. "And it came to pass, in an eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon."—(2 Samuel xi. 2.)

No reason is assigned why the king of Israel remained idle in his palace, while others went forth to fight. "The picture which follows, of a king sleeping during the noon-day, and rising from his bed in the evening, though the practice be not uncommon in those hot countries, does not give us the idea of one actively employed in the service of his country, or in the important duties of his station. Had David, it may be thought, been fighting the Lord's battles against the heathen, or had he been duly anxious for the happiness and good government of the people whom God had placed under his care,

he would have been far removed from the temptation which overpowered him, and have had other thoughts to occupy his mind than the beauty of a stranger. Let us, then, always remember, that, as the only method of destroying weeds is by plowing deep, and diligently laboring the soil, so is it that by honest labor and rational occupation, we are best able to keep away evil thoughts from the soul. It is when men are idle and slumbering, that the devil sows tares in their hearts; and our hearts, if not employed, will as soon gather defilement as the sword gathers rust, when suffered to hang idle on the wall.”*

Circumstances had so shaped themselves, and the king had so readily fallen in with the current which was hurrying him onward to the breakers, that nothing was needed but a slight temptation to call forth the secret power of sin. The beautiful Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, is employed by Satan for this end. The faithful captain is shamefully wronged by the king whom he served so well.

The royal offender, having blackened his soul with infamy and guilt, now dreads the

* Bishop Heber's Parish Sermons, (Murray, London,) vol. ii. p. 101.

incensed husband's wrath, and resorts to the lowest and most contemptible arts to shelter himself from the vengeance so richly deserved. Milder plots and contrivances having failed, with cold-blooded treachery, Uriah is sent with his death-warrant, to be executed by the connivance of Joab. "David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die."—(2 Samuel xi. 14–15.)

What a catalogue of crimes! Indolence, luxury, lust, adultery, hypocrisy, falsehood, treachery, murder! And besides contracting all this guilt himself, David draws others into the vortex with him. The wife of Uriah not only falls a victim to the shameful passion of the king, but it is on her account that the unoffending man must be slain. The laws of honor are violated by obliging Joab to act so base a part towards a brave companion-in-arms. The common soldiers, too, who were commanded to retire and leave Uriah to the mercy of the enemy, thus became accomplices in the murder.

Alas! how are the mighty fallen!

Let us be careful not to be too hard in our censure and condemnation. The heart of every one is "deceitful above all things," and until transformed by the power of God's grace, "desperately wicked." "Out of the heart (says our blessed Saviour), proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies."—(St. Matthew xv. 19.) Yea, out of such hearts as ours, proceed all these awful sins, and every heart which is not watched and guarded night and day, may be unexpectedly betrayed. We cannot pray with too much earnestness, when the sixth and seventh commandments are rehearsed in the service of the Church, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep these laws!"

O, let us strive after purity of heart, without which no one can see God in peace.

David an *adulterer*! Son of Jesse, we forget thy glorious triumph over the stout Goliath. We think not now of thy forbearance, nor of any of thy good qualities of heart; the terrible shock occasioned by thy fall has driven them from our minds. We felt sympathy for thee, David, when Saul

dogged thy steps about, and when thy wicked wife made sport of thee for dancing before the ark ; but now we pity thee no more.

The cruel and unjust world may only point the finger of scorn at poor Bathsheba, but king though thou art, God's angry look is turned on thee ; and good Samuel, who once poured on thee anointing oil, now seems rising from his grave, with his shroud around him, to heap upon thy head his withering curse. Let others besides David treasure up such a lesson.

A poor, fallen woman, in flaunting, gaudy dress, is moving along in the crowded streets, to attract the attention of evil men. Once, this same being, as a little timid girl, was watched over by a tender mother, and loving sisters taught her to stand, and run, and curled her golden hair. She called GOD her FATHER, and delighted to speak with Him in prayer. For months and years she continued as at the beginning of her course. Then, "faint thoughts of evil, like a far-off cloud which the sunset gilds, came first ; nor does the rosy sunset blush deeper along the heaven, than her cheek, at the first thought of evil. Now, ah ! mother, and those guiding elder sisters, could

you have seen the lurking spirit embosomed in that cloud, a holy prayer might have broken the spell, a tear might have washed its stain! Alas! they saw it not; she spoke it not; she was *forsaking the guise of her youth*. She thinketh no more of heaven. She breatheth no more prayers. She hath no more penitential tears to shed; until, after a long life, she drops the bitter tear upon the cheek of despair—then her only suitor. Thou hast *forsaken the covenant of thy God*. Go down!” She had listened once to the enticing, lying words of some deceitful David; and this is the end thereof.

Go, and weep tears of blood, O thoughtless man, over that lowly wayside grave, upon which the summer’s sun expends its fierceness, and the winter’s storm beats with pitiless force,—and no one thinks, or cares, that an immortal being, happy once, but lost—now *for ever* lost—sleeps there in her narrow bed.*

* A sermon by Bishop White, on “*The sin of David in the case of Uriah*,” contained in Fish’s “*History and Repository of Pulpit Eloquence*,” vol. i. p. 443, is so full of real eloquence and power, that we cannot but regret that more of his discourses have not been published. We give one short extract: “From the review of the transaction, let us learn the importance of the admonition, ‘be not

Repent, heartily repent, while yet you may,
O gay deceiver, lest, having been called away,
unforgiven of God, thy crimes be found re-

high-minded, but fear;' and 'let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' If such a person as David, whose writings contain the most just and elevated sentiments concerning the attributes of God and human duty, and devotional compositions admirably descriptive of the breathings of holy desire, could be so far put off his guard by a life of ease and affluence, as to be gradually drawn into crimes of the deepest dye; what a reason is it for humility, for vigilance, and for a constant imploring of the Divine aid!

"As his fall should be a warning to the secure, so his repentance should be an example to the sinner, than which there could have been none more teeming with anguish and self-reproach. But if any should make it an encouragement of presumption, they manifest such a contrariety to his character, in respect to a sense of moral worth and the indispensable requisitions of religion, as makes it too probable that they will never be like him in his seeking and his obtaining of forgiveness.

"Rather, therefore, let it be a motive with all, for the keeping of their passions in subjection. Yes, O man, let it be a lesson to thee, against the indulgence of licentious desires. Let it also lead thee to reflect on the miseries which this destroyer is daily heaping on the human kind. When thou seest him offering up his victims to vice and infamy; when thou tracest his achievements in the births of infants, the heirs of want and wickedness; when thou beholdest the untimely graves which have opened for the reception of his votaries; when thou observest him invad-

gistered against thee in the book of His remembrance.

We should all beware how we venture to pervert the example of David, and thus fancy that we have found an apology for sin. "Let us not flatter ourselves, that because he, so devout, so religious, so distinguished by the favor of Heaven, was once most fatally seduced into sin, that we may therefore commit the same or similar crimes with impunity. On the contrary, if these crimes appear so odious

ing every thing sacred in private life, and blasting all the friendships which arise from its relations; and *lastly*, when thou followest him through scenes of contention, of malice, and of bloodshed, the effects of his mischievous frenzy, ask thyself whether it be possible he should bestow any satisfaction, which shall repay thee for the consciousness of having contributed to this mass of misery. Let the sentiment be impressed by the anticipation of feelings, which may possess thee in thy dying hour, when thou shalt look back on thy actions, as following thee to judgment. Let the effect of such reflections be the guarding of thine heart, by the wholesome instructions of God's word. And put up thy daily prayers for the assistances of His grace, which is competent to the raising of thee above the power of thy corruptions. That grace, if duly cultivated, will carry thee on to the end of life, not only without the consciousness of flagrant crime, but with such purity and self-command as is the source of pleasures infinitely superior to those of sensuality and excess."

and detestable, even in a Jewish monarch, who had to plead in his excuse (though all excuse was vain) the temptations of a court, the manners of the times, the peculiarity of his own circumstances, and the liberties too often taken by men in his situation; they must assume a more frightful aspect in a private Christian, who has none of these mitigating pleas to offer, who lives in much more enlightened and civilized times, has much stricter rules of moral conduct presented to him in the Gospel, is called to a much higher degree of purity and holiness, has far more powerful aid from Heaven to support him in his duty, more terrible punishments to work upon his fears, and more glorious rewards to animate his hopes."

Thus plainly spoke good Dr. Porteus, the bishop of London, in days when pungent preaching was by no means a common thing.

Months and months had passed; the murdered Uriah was mouldering in the grave; and David, who might much better have been dead, continued insensible to his guilt. A spirit of deep slumber would seem to have completely mastered him. But our Heavenly Father, who once loved David with so tender

an affection, had not quite forsaken the wretched offender, but made one effort more, to rouse his torpid conscience. The prophet Nathan was accordingly sent to him, who addressed the shameless monarch in the form of a beautiful allegory. "There was two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor." (We may readily imagine how attentively David listened. He little dreamed that there was any reference to himself.) "The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come unto him."—(2 Samuel xii. 1-4.)

Although the fable was so direct and pointed, David did not discover his own misdeeds in the prophet's story,* and insisted, in the

* Bishop Butler, the author of the "Analogy," has a masterly discourse on "Self-deceit," founded on this in-

height of his indignation, that the guilty wretch who had thus wronged the poor man of his lamb should instantly be put to death.

What must have been the dismay of the royal offender, when Nathan, raising his finger, said, with solemn emphasis: "*Thou art the man!*"

David was too noble to give way to resentment in David's life. He thus concludes: "It is manifest, that there is such a thing as this self-partiality and self-deceit; that in some persons it is to a degree which would be thought incredible, were not the instances before our eyes; of which the behavior of David is perhaps the highest possible one, in a single particular case; for there is not the least appearance that it reached his general character: that we are almost all of us influenced by it in some degree, and in some respects: that therefore every one ought to have an eye to and beware of it. And all that I have further to add upon this subject is, that either there is a difference between right and wrong, or there is not: religion is true, or it is not. If it be not, there is no reason for any concern about it: but if it be true, it requires real fairness of mind and honesty of heart. And, if people will be wicked, they had better of the two be so from the common vicious passions, without such refinements, than from this deep and calm source of delusion, which undermines the whole principle of good; darkens that light, that *candle of the Lord within*, which is to direct our steps; and corrupts conscience, which is the guide of life."—*Bishop Butler's Works*, (Robert Carter's edit.) p. 124.

ment, when he new himself to be wrong, and with a contrite and sorrowing soul, he meekly answered, "I have sinned against the Lord!"

Nor was this brief confession all. His whole after life showed how sincere he was, and how deeply he felt the weight of his guilt and unworthiness.

Let any one read the fifty-first Psalm, which was composed upon this occasion, and doubt David's repentance if he can.*

* If we look at two psalms which David wrote about this time, we shall find that his conscience had *not* been dead in him, but had been tormenting him bitterly; and that he had been trying to escape from it, and afterwards to repent—only in a wrong way.

If we look at the thirty-second Psalm, we shall see there he had begun, by trying to deceive himself, to excuse himself before God. But that had only made him the more miserable. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my daily complaining. For Thy hand was heavy on me, night and day: my moisture was turned to the drought of summer." Then he tried sacrifices. He had fancied, I suppose, that he could make God pleased with him again by showing great devoutness, by offering bullocks and goats without number, as sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; but that made him no happier. At last he found out that God required no sacrifice but a broken heart. That was what God wanted—a broken and a contrite heart; for David to be utterly ashamed of himself,

“The agonies of his soul pass all description. Words fail him, as he attempts to express them. In the thirty-eighth Psalm, he compares his recollections of sin to arrows darting into his flesh, to a wasting disease, to rankling wounds, to broken and aching bones.”*

If we would obtain relief from the upbraidings of conscience, and the horrors of remorse, let us confess our sins now, while God is calling us to do so.

But although the Almighty spared David, and forgave his dreadful crimes, and did not

utterly broken down and silenced, so that he had nothing left to plead; neither past good deeds, nor present devoutness, nor sacrifices: nothing but “O God I deserve all thou canst lay on me, and more. Have mercy on me—mercy is all I ask.”

There was nothing for him, you see, but to make a clean breast of it; to face his sin, and all its shame and abomination, and confess it all, and throw himself on God’s mercy. And when he did that, then, then, and at once, as Nathan told him, God put away his sin. As David says himself, “I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.”—*Kingley’s Sermons for the Times*, p. 294.

* Bradley’s Sermons, p. 80.

Those who would see how the case of David is viewed from a Mohammedan stand-point, can refer to Sale’s Koran, p. 372.

sware in His righteous displeasure that he should never enter into heaven, yet the king paid dearly for his sins. The fearful sentence of the text was executed to the letter,—“Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.”

We shall have occasion, hereafter, to show you proof of this in the history.

Now, my friends, if even the man after God's own heart was stung and tortured all his days by reason of his *one* transgression, think you that sinners in these times can escape?

O beware, beware, how you indulge in wrong doing. It is true, our blessed Redeemer is able and willing to save even to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him. Thus you may gain pardon. Thus you may escape from hell.

But those who commit the sins which David did, will know from their own experience what he suffered. No matter how sincerely they may repent; no matter how freely they may be pardoned, they, too, will be vexed and distressed by thankless, dissipated and worthless children, who will bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Do

not oblige the Almighty to say of any of you,
“*I will raise up evil against thee out of thine
own house !*”

COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men : grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise : that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found ; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

LECTURE VIII.

IS THE YOUNG MAN ABSALOM SAFE?—2 Samuel xviii. 29.

WE have lately been dwelling upon David's grievous *sin*. The *suffering* which followed it will now be brought before us. Previous to the commission of those awful crimes of adultery and murder, he was, comparatively, a happy man. From the moment, however, that he forsook God, troubles multiplied, and he went mourning all his days.

When David is represented as suffering under the just judgments of heaven, the language is adapted to our ordinary mode of thinking and speaking. Christ Jesus has made a full atonement for the sins of all who flee unto him for pardon.

No sufferings, then, which follow sins, can be regarded, in any sense, as *expiations* for them. Our Saviour's atonement is quite enough. The sufferings which we endure are only in the way of discipline, and are designed

to correct and amend in us whatever may offend the eyes of our Heavenly Father.

David repented, truly and sincerely, and God forgave him; but the seeds of his misdoing continued to bring forth bitter fruits during all the remaining days of life.

It was about the space of twelve years before all that was implied in the terrible sentence, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," was fully accomplished. Yet not one jot or tittle of what had been threatened failed to come to pass. Four of David's children were taken from him. The son of Bathsheba, upon whom he doated with all a fond father's love, pined away and died. A daughter, fair and beautiful, remained dishonored in his house. His own profligate and abandoned son, who had done the shameful wrong, was slain by bloody violence. And then, perhaps, harder than all to bear, Absalom,—the handsome and gifted Absalom,—turned rebel against his father's throne.

All these were judgments of God, designed as salutary discipline for David's good. His sin had been months and months in coming to maturity, and breaking out in disgraceful

excesses, but his repentance began at once. This is seen in the patience and resignation with which he submits to God. He also begins again to discharge those public duties, the neglect of which had betrayed him into sin. The siege of Rabbah, beneath the walls of which the brave Uriah had been slain, were now pressed on with vigor, and taken by assault and storm, and all the cities of the Ammonites were overthrown.

We need have no surer evidence of true repentance than when, like David, we meekly acknowledge our vileness, and are truly sorry for our faults, and turn back, with child-like obedience, to perform our neglected duties. "Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, (says the Apostle, who knew the corruptions of human nature so well, and its only cure,) what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge."—(2 Corinth. vii. 11.) The persecution by Saul was a heavy trial, but it was as nothing, compared with what David suffered, when the ingrate Absalom sought his aged father's life, and drove him forth from Jerusalem. See the king, with

trembling steps, heading the long procession of exiles,* who wept aloud at this indignity offered to him whose wisdom and valor had done so much for Israel's renown. The sacred Ark, borne upon the shoulders of the priests, follows in the train. Suddenly David stops, and commands that it shall be returned in safety within the city walls, saying, in a mild and submissive tone, "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back again, and show me both it and His habitation; but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I,—let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."—(2 Samuel xv. 25–26.)

Ah! my friends, it shows a true and repentant spirit, when one can thus commit his cause to a good and gracious God. But there is no end of trouble. As the aged monarch, with sorrowing heart, went on his weary way, a despicable wretch, Shimei by name, "of the family of Saul," (2 Samuel xvi. 5,) dogged his steps with taunting and scornful

* The Rev. J. A. Spencer, D. D., in his "*Sketches of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land*," p. 300, brings up this scene afresh, while describing the steep and stony path into the valley of Jehoshaphat.

words, and cast stones at David and his friends; and when one of the royal guard asked leave to hurl a javlin at the miscreant's head, the request was positively refused. And to show that David's meekness and forbearance was not assumed for one occasion only, but that they were ruling principles of his life, we ought in justice here to say, that at the end of the war, when the king came back in triumph, the contemptible and cringing Shimei was the first to crouch before the king, and offer a pitiful prayer for mercy; and that he heard from the injured David's lips, the gracious and undeserved assurance, "Thou shalt not die."—(2 Samuel xix. 23.)

How glorious and godlike is it to forgive! Although we have been obliged to reveal some dreadful facts in David's checkered life, we shall find ourselves well and actively employed in following his example in the many particulars which are praiseworthy and good.

But we must not go on too fast. David's last penal sorrow is bursting upon his head. He is paying dearly for having lavished his affections in an immoderate degree upon his favorite child, and forbearing to employ the

corrective system which such a disposition as Absalom's required.*

This wicked and unnatural son had

* We may be surprised to think that in so short a time, this daring youth should be emboldened to attempt his enterprise. But there are always weak men to be the tools of such characters; and wicked men to be their abettors. There accompanied him many, who, the narrative says, "went up in their simplicity, and knew not anything;" and the subtle, famous Ahithophel came from his city to aid the unnatural conspiracy. It was this Ahithophel who had been the confidential counsellor of David in his prosperity, and now joined himself to his foe. It was this Ahithophel who persuaded Absalom to prostitute his dignity, his virtue, and every noble feeling, to the base accomplishment of his nefarious designs. It was he who could advise a son to the most certain ways of harrassing and destroying a father; and when he found his counsels neglected, departed to his house, "and hanged himself." How often have such counsellors become the victims of their own plots, and been left by the awful judgments of God to punish themselves for their own depravity.

In the first place, this subject teaches us all, and especially the young, the solemn importance of acquiring a control over our passions and desires. These, if left to be their own directors, may make us base, will make us miserable. * * * * *

The story further teaches parents the solemn importance of implanting and cultivating in their offspring, those principles which are the only sure preservatives from debasement and crime. Happy for David, had he been

weaned the hearts of the people from their lawful king, by the deceitful promise, that if they would aid him in driving David from the throne, he would rule them with more just

more severe with his darling son. * * * We may, thirdly, learn from this history, the barbarity and odiousness of filial disobedience. * * *

Finally. We may learn from our subject the folly and danger of priding ourselves in the possession of personal accomplishments and external charms. We see, in the case before us, that this may be joined with all that is odious in nature; that they may conceal a heart, and cover a disposition which excite our abhorrence. Pride, too, in these exterior excellences—in the graces of person, or human accomplishments—is apt to render men negligent of more solid and useful, nobler, and more permanent qualities. Had Absalom thought less of his beauty, he would have thought more of virtue. Had he trusted less to his cunning, he would have depended more upon his God. As if to punish this foolish vanity, external endowments, when unaccompanied by the excellences of the heart and mind, are generally sources of misconduct and disappointment to their possessor, and often are the causes of disgrace. Beautiful were the locks of Absalom; with pride he polled them every year, and weighed the produce after the king's weight. But, alas, vain youth! He was caught in the tree by his flowing hair; and the occasion of his pride was the instrument of his ruin. Let every one, then, be induced to build his complacence only on the excellences of an amiable heart and upright mind.—(*Bishop Dehon's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 205.*)

and easy sway. A great battle was fought between the followers of the king, and the insurgents under Absalom, in the wood of Ephraim. But even when David had been so outrageously abused, he sat in trembling suspense, hoping that when the messengers came back with tidings of the field of fight, they might bring the grateful assurance that Absalom was safe. Every child remembers with interest, the strange and unusual way in which this hard-hearted youth came to his premature death. Alas! is not the foolish, doating father, reaping bitter fruits from the grievous wickedness of other days?

Absalom was slain. We have no tears to shed for him. But not so with the aged father.

“The pall was settled. He who slept beneath
Was straighten'd for the grave; and, as the folds
Sunk to the still proportions, they betray'd
The matchless symmetry of Absalom.

* * * * *

His helm was at his feet; his banner, soil'd
With trailing through Jerusalem, was laid,
Reversed, beside him.

The soldiers of the king trod to and fro,
Clad in the garb of battle; and their chief,
The mighty Joab, stood beside the bier,
And gazed upon the dark pall steadfastly,

As if he feared the slumberer might stir.
A slow step startled him. He grasp'd his blade
As if a trumpet rang ; but the bent form
Of David enter'd, and he gave command,
In a low tone, to his few followers—
And left him with his dead. The king stood still
Till the last echo died ; then, throwing off
The sackcloth from his brow, and laying back
The pall from the still features of his child,
He bow'd his head upon him, and broke forth
In the resistless eloquence of wo.”*

“ O my son Absalom ! my son, my son
Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee,
O Absalom, my son, my son ! ”

Has not the terrible threatening come to pass, which must have caused David's ears to tingle, when the prophet uttered it at the first ? “ Behold I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house ! ” †

* Willis.

† Returning to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and passing along its eastern side, we came to the great burying-ground of the Jews. * * * The tomb of Absalom is a single stone, as large as an ordinary two-story house, and ornamented with twenty-four semi-columns of the Doric order, supporting a triangular pyramidal top. The top is battered and defaced ; no pilgrim, whether Jew or Christian, ever passes through the valley of Jehoshaphat without casting a stone at the sepulchre of the rebellious son. No entrance to this sepulchre has ever been discovered ; and

Amidst the melting influences of such a scene as that just now described, we feel almost like retracting some of the hard things which we have said of David, when his wilful wickedness forced every right feeling of the heart to rise up in just displeasure. We look with compassion upon thy wrinkled brow, and furrowed cheeks, and gushing tears, thou man of many griefs;—but, David, it is only the wages of thy sin. All this suffering was purchased by deeds of which humanity should be heartily ashamed.

Some captious inquirer will be waiting for a favorable opportunity to ask, “How can a man led astray by evil passions like those of David, be regarded as a pattern of virtue, and the only way of getting into the interior is by a hole broken for the purpose in one of the sides.—(*Stephen's Travels in Egypt, Arabia, and the Holy Land, Vol. ii. p. 171. See also Dr. Robinson's Biblical Researches, Vol. i. p. 236.*)

THE PILLAR OF ABSALOM, which is said to have been erected to the rebellious and unfortunate, yet loved and lamented child of David, is a monolith, cut out from the rock.—(2 Sam. xviii. 18.) The structure bears upon it traces of a mixture of Doric, Ionic, and Egyptian architecture. Whether these indicate its true origin, or was cut upon its solid front in after days, cannot be certainly determined.—(*Odenheimer's Jerusalem and its Vicinity, p. 57.*)

be honored by the distinguished appellation of *the man after God's own heart ?*"

We frankly answer, that we by no means consider him as being such a perfect example, and the conclusion which is so often drawn from the title of honor bestowed upon him, is entirely gratuitous. "The chief design of God in separating the Jewish nation from the rest of mankind, was to perpetuate the knowledge of Himself by means of this peculiar people, and to preserve the worship of the one true God amidst an idolatrous world. * * *

Whoever, therefore, exerted himself vigorously and effectively in promoting this great end of the Jewish theocracy, might, with the strictest propriety, be called a man after God's own heart; because he acted in conformity to the main purpose of God's heart; he did the very thing that God wanted to have done; he forwarded the grand design he had in view. Now this was precisely the character of David, the distinguishing excellence of his life. He was a sincere and hearty lover of his country, a zealous observer of its laws,—in opposition to all idolatry. It was not, therefore, on account of his *private virtues*, but his *public*

conduct, that David was honored with the name of the man after God's own heart."*

Thus much in answer to this difficulty.

Again, the question might be very fairly put, "Why should David be required to suffer such heavy chastisements at God's hands, even after he had sincerely repented, and had been freely pardoned?"

The reply has already been anticipated, in part. In addition to what was said before, however, we may properly remark that the example of the king of Israel would be very great, either for good or evil, and that hence, the honor of God absolutely required that the violation of His holy laws should be punished in the sight of all people.

Unless *we* repent of, and forsake our sins, even the Gospel of mercy offers us no hope. And if people will persist in doing wrong, they must receive for the wrong that they do, and be smitten with the rod of discipline, which is wielded by a FATHER'S hand.

A closing lesson now from the text itself,—
"*Is the young man Absalom safe?*"

Has no parent, here, good reason to be anxious, as David was, about some wayward,

* Bishop Porteus' Sermons, p. 293.

disobedient son? A child who has not only grieved a father's heart by stubbornness, and perverseness, and sin, but who is showing a daily contempt for God and his holy church; scorning his father's church, and his father's God? It is greatly to be feared that there are many such.

Now it becomes all parents, thus vexed and sorrowing, anxiously to inquire, whether there be not some grievous sin committed in the past, and still unrepented of and unforgiven, for which this heavy punishment is following them about. With a sincere desire for the good of such an undutiful son, and with a proper regard, also, to your own comfort and peace, you should ask with David, "*Is the young man safe?*" and, if not, "Can I do nothing to make him so?"

COLLECT.

O LORD, we beseech Thee favorably to hear the prayer of Thy people: that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness for the glory of Thy name, through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

LECTURE IX.

AND DAVID LONGED, AND SAID, O ! THAT ONE WOULD GIVE ME DRINK OF THE WATER OF THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM, WHICH IS BY THE GATE !—2 Samuel xxiii. 15.

WHEN Sir Philip Sidney,—who flourished in the days of Queen Elizabeth,—lay, mortally wounded, on the battle-field, he called for a cup of water to quench his painful thirst. The cup was brought, and he had already raised it to his feverish lips, when his eye rested upon a poor dying soldier, who watched with eagerness the cooling draught which the other was about to take. The noble man, forgot his own death-thirst, and passing the dripping vessel to his fainting comrade, said, “*Drink it, friend ; thy necessities are greater than mine !*”

What a picture some skilful painter might make of such a scene ! But the history connected with the text will furnish another subject, no less worthy of being thus portrayed.

The scene opens on a field of strife, within sight of Bethlehem. King David and his brave associates are resting from their toils. Between the camp of Israel and the town of Bethlehem, the Philistines, bristling with armor, are drawn up in hostile array. Both parties are prepared, at a moment's warning, to renew the fight,—but both are glad to have a breathing spell, before the struggle for the mastery shall again begin. Weary and languid, from the efforts already made, David bethinks him of that cool, sparkling well, “by the gate” of Bethlehem, from which he had so often drank in his boyish days.

Without reflecting what the consequences might be, he breathed forth the passionate wish, “Oh! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!”

He forgets that a hostile and dangerous foe is encamped between the forces of Israel and the well of whose refreshing waters he desired so much to taste. It does not occur to him that it could only be reached by forcing a passage through the Philistine ranks, and that even one cup of water might cost the price of blood. David does not remem-

ber this, and while he issues no direct command that the perilous attempt should be made, he expresses a desire that water might be brought.

Three of his most distinguished officers heard his earnest words. With them, the wish of their leader was equal to a command. They wait for no order from his lips, but, seizing their weapons, they rush forth with impetuous haste, and, striking with manly blows upon the right and left, they carve a passage through the opposing ranks. They reach the well, and filling a helmet with the crystal waters, they hasten back, again beat off the hostile troops, who rise to oppose their steps, and, amidst the admiring shouts of their countrymen, they regain the camp, and present the coveted water to the king. David seizes the vessel with eager hands, and longs to convey it to his lips. He beholds the water, and though fresh and pure, it looks to him like blood. Sober reason has regained her seat, and he feels a just compunction, that an unguarded wish had caused three noble men to place their lives in such fearful peril. He cannot consent to be refreshed with the water purchased at such a

rate. He denies himself a gratification which he prized so much, and with solemn deliberation, poured the water on the ground, as an offering to the Lord.

We blame those three captains, and yet there is much to admire in what they did. Had their king commanded them to go, it would have been their duty, as good soldiers, to obey. But he had simply given utterance to a wish. They could not have been found fault with had they paid no attention to it. No doubt there was water enough in the camp to supply all needful wants. It was quite too much that they should risk their lives for the gratification of an inconsiderate desire. Water from other sources might have quenched the king's thirst, as well as hat from the well of Bethlehem.

At the same time, we cannot but admit that the three captains were actuated by a high and noble spirit.

Would to God that not only in the discharge of the various obligations of life, but also in the performance of higher duties to the Supreme Being, that more persons might be found by whom the expression of a wish from one entitled to obedience, might have all

the effect of a command. Alas, how much of "eye-service" is to be discovered in the conduct of thousands,—an eye-service which gladly shirks from duty, instead of looking out for occasions to practice it.

My Christian friends, even when engaged in the service of our God, are we not too often disposed to turn aside from the performance of some act becoming our character as children of God, simply on the ground that it has not been *commanded*, in so many words, when we are perfectly satisfied that such an act would be most acceptable unto Him?

The three devoted warriors who made their way, at such hazards, to the well of Bethlehem, had not been told to go. They merely knew that it would gratify their monarch to taste of the refreshing water.

What an example do they set to every soldier of Christ, in this act of heroic daring! Whenever we would excuse ourselves from making a sacrifice for our Heavenly Master; whenever a desire of ease and self-indulgence would tempt us to forego the performance of a duty, merely because it is enforced by no positive *command*, it will be well for us to recall

this lesson which has been set before us to-day.

We have spoken, thus far, of the conduct of David's three captains. It is time that something should be said of the conduct of David himself.

He must have had evidences, on former occasions, to convince him of the devoted attachment of his subordinates, and, therefore, it became him to be most careful not to test their ready obedience on occasions of trifling moment. Good and judicious persons, who occupy the position of superiors, whether it be as the head of a family, or the principal of a school, or the commander of an army, or the governor of a state or a nation, should adopt this rule of conduct,—to be very careful that the commands which they issue are judicious; and “the greater the known readiness to comply with their wishes, the greater should be the caution that those wishes be always reasonable and just.”

It would certainly have been much more in keeping with the character of a good soldier, whose whole career is supposed to be one of hardness and exposure, had David been satisfied to quench his thirst with the water

which had been provided for his associates. It is no excuse for him to say that in an hour of weariness and lassitude, he was living over again, as in a dream, the days of childhood, and recalled with grateful satisfaction the refreshing image of the well by the gate of Bethlehem. Had he kept such contemplations to himself, there would have been nothing to blame in him, but when he so far forgets himself as to give utterance to a wish which could only be gratified at the risk of human life, we cease to sympathize with him, and our feelings of respect well nigh give place to contempt. Indeed, he must have despised himself, when, with almost childish thoughtlessness, he had expressed a desire for water from his favorite well, he saw the three devoted captains hastening over the plain, as though they had been entrusted with a commission of vast moment; when he beheld the formidable front which the Philistines presented to them, and when, at last, breathless and exhausted from the unwonted effort, they presented the water which had been brought from the well under circumstances so appalling.

You might say, as an apology for David,

that he gave no command, and that the warriors were not obliged to go. True, but he knew that so great was their regard for himself, and so anxious were they to gratify his every desire, that his passionate exclamation, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" would be enough to prompt them to any effort to satisfy his longings, however inconvenient and dangerous.

We have brought out the fact in this strong light, in order that each of us may answer for himself, whether *we* have been guilty of no such want of consideration and kindness towards those who may be subjected to our control. Has no one in a subordinate capacity, whether child or pupil, constituent or servant, been obliged to take some unnecessary and painful step, and even to put health and life in jeopardy, to gratify an unreasonable and selfish whim of ours? The question may never have presented itself in such a shape to you before, but a moment's consideration will convince you that it is not a trifling nor unimportant one. Life is made up of small matters, when taken one by one,—but the whole, when counted together, form a

serious array. But as in the conduct of the three warriors, we found something to praise and blame, so in the conduct of the king, whom they were so anxious to serve, there was something to redeem his character from unmitigated reproach. We can readily picture to ourselves the appearance of David, when the cup was presented to him, containing the water which he had longed for with such inconsiderate craving. Fresh, and clear and sparkling as it was, he turned from it with loathing. It seemed to him like the blood of the devoted men, who had gone for it at the peril of their lives. Well might he lay down the vessel, and say, in words of sorrow and self-reproach, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this!"

Instead of arguing, as he could, that he had not commanded the captains to venture upon such a perilous errand, and that it would be poor return for their warm and affectionate attachment, if he should refuse to drink what they had taken such pains to furnish,—instead of arguing in this way, he poured the water upon the ground, an offering to the Lord, as an acknowledgment of his sin, and that some atonement was needed to wash its guilt away.

We find it hard to recognize the youthful hero who once bade defiance to the mighty Goliath of Gath, in the weary king, exclaiming, in words of mournful complaint, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" But there is another occasion in David's life, when, forgetful of the wants of the body, and mindful only of the longings of the soul, he cried out, with still greater earnestness, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"—(Ps. xlii. 1-2.)

As the poor hart in the droughts of summer hastens through the burning desert that it may quench its thirst, and cool its weary limbs in the flowing brooks, "so does the loving soul long, and call, and hasten unto Him who is the fount of love. In the wilderness of this mortal life, while the spirit is away from grace and from the Giver of grace, it thirsts and wearies for Him whose are the living waters of holy baptism, and the refreshing cup of holy communion." *

* Plain Commentary on the Psalms, vol. i. p. 283

Bishop Wainwright, in his beautiful book of travels in Palestine, speaks of having drank from the well, near the gate of Bethlehem,—for whose refreshing waters the fainting David so earnestly pined. All this may remind us, my friends, of One who was born in this same Bethlehem, and who says to each way-worn pilgrim in the journey of life, “If any man thirst, let him come unto ME, and drink.”—(St. John vii. 37.) “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”—(St. John iv. 14.)

The early fathers of the Church were fond of looking for hidden meanings, under those places in Scripture which might seem, at first, to have merely a simple, historical import. They would not pass over the incident in David’s life, upon which we have been commenting to-day, without a thorough and careful sifting. And surely, it “were not difficult to give a parabolic character to the occurrences, and to imagine them ordered with a view to David’s instruction. If water is to be fetched from the well of Bethlehem, it must be with the discomfiture of a vast host of

foes ; three unite in the purpose, and overbear all opponents. And if “living water” is to be brought to those who lie parched on the moral desert of the earth, indeed it can only be with the defeat of mightier than the Philistines ; principality and power withstand the endeavor ; who shall prevail in so great an enterprise ? Three must combine ; it is not a work for any one person, even though divine ; but three shall unite, to strike down the adversaries, and bring the draught of life to the perishing ; and if the cup come apparently in the hand of but one of the three, the other two shall have been equally instrumental in procuring the blessing.” *

“And David longed, and said, Oh ! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem !” Whether we consider the text as referring to our bodily wants alone, or as implying, also, an anxious desire after God’s refreshing grace, for the fainting soul,—how consoling to remember that better world,—

* Melvill’s Sermons, vol. ii, p. 60. It is proper to add that many of the *thoughts* in this Lecture are borrowed from the same source. Those who are familiar with the majestic march of Melvill’s sentences, will perceive that the *style* is not such as that distinguished preacher would care to claim.

the believer's eternal home—where God's redeemed children “shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water.”—(Rev. vii. 16–17.)

COLLECT.

O LORD, we beseech Thee, mercifully hear our prayer, and spare all those who confess their sins unto Thee; that they, whose consciences by sin are accused, by Thy merciful pardon may be absolved: through CHRIST our LORD.
Amen.

LECTURE X.

AND DAVID'S HEART SMOTE HIM, AFTER THAT HE HAD
NUMBERED THE PEOPLE.—2 Samuel xxiv. 10.

Only a few scenes are left, in the closing years of David's life; but these are too important to be passed over without notice.

At the end of the memorable civil war which had been planned and carried on by the renegade Absalom, peace was again restored, and the king was more firmly seated than ever upon the throne.

But the sunshine of returning prosperity had hardly begun to gladden and revive his heart, before the clouds of adversity thickened and lowered,—the precursors of fresh vengeance from heaven. For three years' space, the Israelites suffered from the grievous famine; (2 Samuel xxi. 1;) and when David, in alarm and anguish, inquired the cause, an oracular response from the Almighty declared it to be a judicial consequence of the wrongs

which Saul had done to the Gibeonites. These people, as you will remember, were some of the original inhabitants who had enjoyed possession of the land, long before the arrival of the Israelites, but whom God, on account of their abominable idolatries, had determined to destroy. By craft and falsehood, the Gibeonites obtained an oath of preservation from Joshua; but after he discovered the trick which had been practiced upon him, although he felt obliged to fulfil his solemn promise, he condemned them to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the congregation, all their days.*—(Joshua ix. 23.) During four hundred years, they and their descendants patiently endured the bondage which they had thus brought upon themselves, and perhaps they would have continued to do so, in uncomplaining silence, had it not been for the perfidy of Saul, who

* It cannot be doubted but the Gibeonites, being permitted to preserve their lives and property, on condition of becoming "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord," must have renounced idolatry: for the attendance of avowed idolaters at the altar for any purpose, would have been an intolerable profanation."—*Graves on the Pentateuch* p. 343.

broke the agreement which Joshua had made, and persecuted and destroyed great numbers of them.

Strange as it may seem, there can be little doubt that this miserable man persuaded himself that he was doing a very praiseworthy act. He had once suffered under God's displeasure, because he spared the Amalekites, whom he had been commanded to exterminate, and now he was so anxious to make up for his remissness on that occasion, that he leveled his misguided zeal against all the enemies of Israel, and especially against the defenceless Gibeonites.

How perfectly *natural* this was! Observe, we do not say how *right*, but how strictly in accordance with the promptings of an unrenewed heart, and a conscience clouded by sin!

It is one of the most common things in the world for people to try to atone for one evil deed by committing another.

Nearly forty years passed away before the guilty ones were punished. But although it would have seemed probable, from this long delay, that God had forgotten, the unjust and murderous offence was fresh in His remem-

brance. "Because sentence against an evil is not executed speedily, (Eccles. viii. 11,) the wicked are often led to hope that they are perfectly safe. Ah! it is the security of those who are sleeping near the treacherous crater of a volcano.

But why this long delay? Why was not the cruel slaughter of the Gibeonites speedily avenged? Perhaps Saul had already received his full share of punishment. "*His bloody house,*" as they are called, (2 Samuel xxi.,) the partners of his perfidy and murder, must have their turn.* Thus parents may entail misery upon their posterity. God *does* visit the sins of fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation.

We are all suffering, to this day, the sad effects of Adam's disobedience. Every one must have observed how the children of the intemperate and the licentious endure many miseries for their fathers' sake. Viewed in this light, the very *delay* in the punishment of the house of Saul, is a most fearful *warning*. We are now to see David, once more, in his old character as a warrior.

The Philistines, with whom, in boyhood,

* Memoirs of Lord Teignmouth, p. 233.

he had begun the unequal contest, were still obstinate and unsubdued.

Although they had met with so many discouraging reverses, they continued to show their hatred for the true God, by making assaults upon his people, and on this occasion, headed by a general of gigantic size, who had gained for himself an honorable name in war, they went forth, confident of success.

David, advanced in years, and broken down by sorrow and misfortune, buckled on his armor afresh, and fought with the powerful son of the terrible Goliath,—a man so conspicuous in sacred story.

In spite of the anxious remonstrances of friends, the aged monarch continued to fight the Lord's battles, and expose himself to great fatigue and danger, until the four descendants of Goliath were destroyed, and the Philistines were brought to a state of complete submission.

In a spiritual sense, all this should be realized in the life of every true servant of God. The zealous, devoted Christian, is a *soldier*. He, too, contends against a terrible giant,—the monster *sin*.

The feeblest child may come off triumphant,

who will go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of HIS righteousness only.

But *one* successful contest will by no means suffice. There is little rest for the Christian on this side of the grave. The great CAPTAIN of our salvation is constantly repeating the warning and the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—(Rev. ii. 10.)

As David, though aged and infirm, was called upon to contend with the same fierce enemies whose assaults had disturbed his earlier days, so, also, with the soldier of the cross; and as *he* was sustained alike in youth and age, by God's almighty arm, so, for the encouragement of every faithful believer, the kind assurance has been given, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."—(Isaiah xli. 4.)

Here we must shift the scene again, and bring before you a circumstance which is very remarkable, on more accounts than one. The children of Israel were now at peace. The toils and dangers of war were forgotten—

may, worse than this ; they who had received so many signal proofs of God's goodness, began to be grievously unmindful of Him.

Former experience had prepared us to look out for fresh judgments from Heaven. These make their appearance this time in a most unusual way.

As there is an apparent contradiction between what is said in the second book of Samuel, on this subject, and the record in the first of Chronicles, we shall place the two passages side by side, that we may see the whole difficulty in its full force. We read, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah."

Then, again, in the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, we are told, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

This has always been a favorite point with infidels. "See how the Bible contradicts itself!" they scoffingly exclaim ; "here, in one place, it is distinctly said that the LORD moved David to number the tribes of Israel,

and in another, that Satan induced him to do it. Which statement is correct?"

Let us be calm, my unbelieving friend, and face the difficulty bravely, if difficulty there be.

Every one who is acquainted with the Bible, knows that it is very common for the sacred writers to represent the Almighty as *doing* that which, in the ordinary course of His providence, He *allows* to be done; so that this single consideration would make everything plain and satisfactory; but, according to the original Hebrew, we are not required to believe that David was tempted to commit this offence, either by God, or by Satan.

The word Satan, though often used with reference to that fallen angel who is the great enemy and adversary of our race, signifies only, in general, *an adversary*, and, therefore, we may very properly read the passage in the First Book of Chronicles, thus: "An adversary stood up against Israel, and excited David." For all that we know, this adversary may have been some counsellor, or adviser, about the royal court.

The other passage, (2 Samuel xxiv.,) may, with equal propriety, be rendered, "The

anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and one excited David, [*i. e.* the person mentioned in Chronicles,] saying, Go, number Israel.”*

We do not know, certainly, what motive prompted the king to take this census of the people. “It is probable, however, that he coveted an extensive empire; and having, through the suggestions of an adversary, given way to this evil disposition, he could not well look to God for help, and, therefore, wished to know whether the thousands of Israel and Judah might be deemed equal to the conquest which he meditated. His design was to force all the Israelites to perform military service, and engage in the contest which his ambition had in view; and as the people might resist this census, soldiers were employed to make it, who might not only put down resistance, but also suppress any disturbances that might arise.”†

The whole scheme, whatever it may have been, was so manifestly opposed to the will of God, that even the fierce and head-strong

* Letters on Infidelity, by Bishop Horne, (Episcopal Press, 1831,) p. 308-9.

† Horne's Introduction, vol. i. p. 417.

Joab did his best to dissuade David from attempting it.

But reasoning and remonstrance were alike in vain, and the great undertaking was recklessly begun. The business of making the census* had already occupied more than nine months, when the iniquitous proceeding was suddenly stopped.—(2 Samuel xxiv. 8–9.)

O foolish king, one would have thought that you had already endured trouble enough, without obliging the Almighty to pour fresh bitterness into your cup!

But, my friends, let us be slow in our condemnation of others—God is forced to punish some of us with many stripes—He speaketh once, yea twice, while men regard it not.

It was left to David's choice, as to what the punishment should be—whether seven years of famine, or three months' flight be-

* It is a curious fact, that when John Graunt, "Citizen of London," engaged, in 1662, in determining the population of that great metropolis, he felt a good deal of hesitation himself, from a reluctance to transgress the strict letter of the Scriptural prohibition against numbering the people; "and his fellow citizens never forgave him for this offensive piece of heresy."—*London Quarterly Review*, July, 1859, p. 34.

fore the enemy, or three days of pestilence. The king wisely preferred to leave his case to the merciful disposal of God—and so, as the least of the evils, “a pestilence” was sent “upon Israel from the morning, even to the time appointed; and there died of the people, . . . seventy thousand men”—(2 Sam. xxiv. 15.) Prince and people both had *sinned*, therefore both must *suffer*. It is true, that David with a generous forgetfulness of self, besought the Lord that all the vengeance might fall upon himself, and that the people might be spared; but Israel had wilfully offended against the MOST HIGH, and they had no right to expect to escape.

Some light will be thrown upon the nature of the sin of which David was guilty, in numbering the people, by a passage in the Book of Exodus, (chap. xxx. 12,) where such a census of the nation is spoken of, not as a mere enumeration to gratify pride or curiosity, but as a religious rite, by which their moral condition was to be determined. And when, after such a scrutiny, evil practices should be discovered, a ransom was to be paid, *that there might be no plague among them.*

Joab appears to have anticipated the very visitation which followed—the judgment threatened in this part of the law of Moses. So then, David's offence was most wilful and wicked. *His* proposed census had no reference to repentance, or discipline, but was merely prompted by vain glory.

The king must have waited in fearful suspense, the determination of the Almighty as to what his punishment should be. “Under what shape (to borrow another's words) must vengeance come that it may touch him most closely, and most clearly prove by what it is provoked? You will admit at once that, forasmuch as it was the thought of having many subjects, by which David had been puffed up, the most suitable punishment was the destruction of thousands of those subjects; for this took away the source of exaltation, and stripped the boastful king of the strength on which he vain-gloriously rested. Had not the plague been stayed before the fixed time expired, had it been allowed to destroy, at the same rate throughout the three days, it appears there must have perished full a third of those whom Joab had numbered: as it was, there fell seventy

thousand men; no inconsiderable part of such a population as Israel. Certainly this was adapting the penalty to the fault; for not only was David punished, but punished by an act of retributive justice, from which himself and others might learn what it was which had displeased the Almighty. If we recur to the cases which we adduced, as bearing close similarity to that of David, when numbering his people, we shall see the punishment was precisely that which the nature of the crime suggested and demanded. The monied man, who counts up with complacency his accumulations of property, and takes the sum of his possessions with the same motive and the same feeling as the King of Israel took the sum of his subjects, what would be in his case the most appropriate visitation? what the exactest retribution? Unquestionably that his boasted wealth should melt away, that the riches which he had proudly reckoned up, and vainly thought of increasing, should be suddenly diminished, as though the Almighty, according to his own words, had 'blown on them and scattered them.' Or the intellectual man, who parades, with undisguised satisfaction, the powers of his

reason, marshalling the acuteness, and the strength, and the penetration of his mind, and all with the intent of proving his own sufficiency for moral enterprise and discovery—how shall he be most fitly punished, if not by the weakening and discomfiture of those very faculties which have ministered to his pride? What will teach him so sensibly and so appropriately as the making or proving feeble those intellectual resources, his confidence in which has induced a contempt of the disclosures of revelation and the assistances of grace. And if, in these cases, the punishment could be most severe, and, at the same time, most strictly retributive, which should be directed against the object of the pride and the confidence by which God had been displeased, shall not the same be confessed in the instance of David, when the pestilence swept away his subjects, and thus thinned the multitude on which he had looked with sinful exultation? ”*

In the midst of wrath, God remembers mercy. While the terrible pestilence was sweeping onward with its scorching breath, “the Lord repented HIM of the evil,” and

* “Golden Lectures” for 1852.

said to the destroying Angel, "It is enough : stay now thy hand." Terror and despair gave place to joy and thanksgiving, and David "built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings."—(2 Sam. xxiv. 25.)

On the same spot, long years afterwards, CHRIST JESUS, the one true sacrifice, was offered upon the cross. The plague of sin, which otherwise must have destroyed us all, has thus been stayed, and that gracious God, who then became reconciled unto David, is ready to give us His blessing. Let us all betake ourselves, then, to repentance and earnest prayer.

P R A Y E R .

We humbly beseech THEE, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and, for the glory of Thy name, turn from us all those evils which we most justly have deserved ; and grant, that in all our troubles, we may put our whole trust and confidence in THY mercy, and evermore serve THEE in holiness and pureness of living, to THY honor and glory ; through our only Mediator and Advocate, JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

LECTURE XI.

So DAVID SLEPT WITH HIS FATHERS.—1 Kings ii. 10.

The shadows are deepening. We are now drawing nigh the end. David's days of activity are over, and we are soon to stand by his sick bed, and watch his departure from the earth.

Almost every one, unless a martyr to painful disease, has a desire to live long, and few would acknowledge that they are ready to die; and yet, the season of old age, if attended by the loss of our various faculties, and impaired health, is anything but a time of enjoyment.

"The silver livery of advised age" commands respect, and if crippled by infirmities, calls forth compassion; but "the hoary head is only a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness."—(Proverbs xvi. 31.)

When he had reached the age of seventy, David began, with more earnestness than be-

fore, to prepare for his coming change: a change upon which such important destinies depend. But even then, when every additional effort must have cost him still greater exhaustion and fatigue, and every fresh trouble weighed more heavily upon him, he could secure no rest nor respite for his days of weakness and imbecility. That awful curse of evil from his own house,—a curse which he had so richly merited,—broke out afresh, and David was taught, in a new and painful lesson, how evil and bitter a thing is sin.

His son Adonijah, with strange contempt for his father's sacred rights, rudely crowded the old man from the throne; and those friends who had defended David's cause so manfully before, now joined the usurper's ranks. Among these, we are almost ashamed to say, were Joab, the invincible and brave, and Abiathar, the priest.—(1 Kings i. 7.) *

* The scene described in the sacred story will be brought back with still greater distinctness to every reader's mind, who will refer to "*Notes of Travel in the East*," (p. 185,) by Dr. Dorr, Rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia. To show how well one is repaid for a careful study of the Bible, it will be only necessary to turn to "*Blunt's Undesigned Coincidences*," (Carter's edition,) p. 160, a book well worth having.

At this critical moment, the prophet Nathan, who knew what promise had been made to Bathsheba, with reference to Solomon, her son, reminded her of this, and she accordingly claimed the fulfilment of these pledges at David's hands.

So Zadok, the priest, was called, and the young man anointed king. Then the rebels came in haste to throw down their arms, and swear fealty to the rising power.

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die." (1 Kings ii.) What a change since the shepherd boy, then so "ruddy and of a fair countenance," had taken his sling in his hand, and hastened to meet the Philistine in single combat. All that is left of David, the youthful champion, the poet,* the king,

* Although we are accustomed to speak, in a general way, of the Book of Psalms, as if David had been the author of all of them, such is not the case. "The inspired writers of the Psalms lived during a period of about a thousand years. The earliest of the Psalms is supposed by Dr. Lightfoot to be the eighty-eighth, and to have been written by Heman, the son of Zerah, during the captivity in Egypt; and this opinion seems strongly confirmed by the internal evidence, though it cannot be considered as certain. The ninetieth Psalm, which is inscribed 'a Prayer of Moses, the man of God,' is almost universally acknowledged to have been written by Moses in the wilderness, about B. C. 1489; and the Psalm which follows

is this feeble, dim-eyed old man, who is about to resign the sceptre to his son.

When the stupifying effects of disease, or it was very probably also, the work of the great lawgiver. Some few of the Psalms which contain no reference to Mount Zion or to Jerusalem, might have been written during the time of the Judges and of Samuel. But by far the larger half of the whole the Church owes to David, the Prophet-king of Judah and of Israel, 'the sweet Psalmist of Israel.' Seventy-four of the Psalms are inscribed with his name in the Hebrew, and a still greater number in the LXX.; and nearly all of these bear the plain impress of the spirit of 'the man after God's own heart.' His troubles, sorrows, fears; his affection, courage, faith; his intense penitence and self-abasement; his boundless joy and exultation have but one end and object—God, whom he knew to be his Saviour and Defender. All the things of nature: its loveliness, its still repose, its storms and awfulness; all the chances and changes of human life,—and the experience of David in these was wide indeed; all that music and poetry can touch the feelings and excite the spirit by;—all these were to David but mere means to lead his soul to God, on whose love and righteousness he reposed, and to make the love and righteousness of God more real to himself. Two Psalms, the seventy-second and the one hundred and twenty-seventh, are written by Solomon, and, with the Book of Canticles, are all that remain of the thousand and five songs which he wrote. The tone of these Psalms is calm and majestic, but they lack the passionate, earnest emotions of David, his father. Twelve Psalms have in their titles the name of Asaph for their author. It seems clear that there were two Psalmists, at least, who bore this

the no less fearful ravings of insanity, unfit one to realize, or to be alarmed at, the approach of death, of course there will be perfect indiff-

name. Eleven more of the Psalms are assigned by their superscriptions to the sons of Korah. These were the Levites who were descended from that Korah who perished in the wilderness; they appear to have devoted themselves to psalmody and music, and among them, and under the instruction of Samuel, who was one of them, it is likely that David obtained that love for sacred poesy, and that knowledge of sacred music, for which he was distinguished from his very youth; and this early connection and friendship between David and the family of Korah was not without its fruits; for in the time of his adversity several of the Korhites came to Ziklag as his soldiers and allies. The Psalms of the Sons of Korah were composed at various periods, from the reign of David to the captivity; but perhaps the greater number during the reign of Jehoshaphat, and during the desolation of the temple, and the banishment of the priests and Levites in the time of Ahaz. The other Psalms have no names prefixed to them in Hebrew, and their writers can only be gathered from conjecture. It is extremely probable that Ezra was the writer of Psalm one hundred and nineteen, and also of the first Psalm, which stands as an introduction to the whole book; and it is not unlikely that Josiah composed Psalm one hundred and two. Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah are given by the seventy interpreters as writers of certain Psalms; but we can assign but little weight to the titles of the LXX. where they differ from the Hebrew."—(Abridged from the preface to PLAIN COMMENTARY on the PSALMS.)

erence on the subject. But it may well be doubted whether any person in his sober senses ever meditates upon this great event without very solemn feelings, and, not unfrequently, with those akin to dread.

Thus, we hear David exclaim, in one of his own Psalms, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me."—(lv. 4.)

Sometimes there will be most gloomy forebodings of the agonies of death, even when we feel quite confident of rest and security after that narrow sea has been safely crossed.

But David felt that he had something more important to do, than to spend the short remnant of life in unavailing speculations as to how much bodily suffering he should be required to undergo.

So far as that matter is concerned, a sharp toothache, or a chronic rheumatism, are often far worse than the pains of death itself. If we are prepared to go, all things else are of small moment.

The king of Israel, after a long and glorious reign of forty years, began to "set his house in order," that no unnecessary vexations might arise in the kingdom, and that he might do

those things which were just and right towards God and man.

We must live good lives, if we wish to die in peace. Nothing else can atone for the loss of this. The highest flights of genius; the proudest achievements of the warrior,—all that man can accomplish by the most diligent improvement of his powers, will afford the soul no comfort in a dying hour, unless peace has been made with God, through the merits and intercession of our adorable Redeemer.

One of David's great faults had been, a foolish indulgence of his children,—an indulgence which was the direct cause of many evils to them and to himself.

This, therefore, was the first error which he now strove to correct, and you may discover how anxious he felt upon the subject, by reading the solemn charge which he addressed to his son Solomon.—(1 Kings ii.)

My friends, if you have any regard for your own happiness, and the well-being of your children, do not wait until a dying hour, before they hear from your lips sound and wholesome advice, and discover in your lives an example which they may safely follow.

Having carefully and conscientiously arranged his domestic duties, David next

called together the princes, and nobles, and commanders of Israel, (1 Chronicles xxviii. 29,) and declared to them, in tender and affecting words, the goodness of the Almighty to him and his, and commended the kingdom to the holy keeping of Abraham's God.

Moreover, he spoke of the fond desire of his heart, which, for years past, had occupied his thoughts,—the desire of building a glorious temple to the honor of God's name. He laid before the dignitaries of the court the plans for this temple, as he had received them by direct inspiration from Heaven, and entrusted to them, as his executors, the immense wealth collected for the sacred purpose, which Solomon was permitted to accomplish.

If men have accumulated property during their lives, they will generally give directions in their wills that it may be divided among their children, after they, themselves, have lost all control over the matter. But how few are wise, like David, in leaving something which shall be for the glory of God, and for the good of generations yet unborn!

Suppose that, instead of providing for the building of the temple, the dying monarch had followed the usual course of the world, and left everything to his children. If able to look

back from another state of being, upon the troubled course of this mortal life, he would have seen his sons rioting in extravagance and dissipation, because an ample fortune having been given them, there was no incentive left for honorable exertion; while his daughters, if they did not squander his hard-earned treasury in finery and fashion, would be found the slaves of indifferent or dissolute husbands, who, having sought such alliances from selfish and unworthy motives, could neither be expected to cherish love, nor practice forbearance.

Give to the ALMIGHTY *His* share of the property entrusted to your stewardship, if you wish your children to be happy. Nothing which is wrongfully kept back from HIM, will be of advantage to those who inherit it.

It always affords a peculiar satisfaction to the survivors, to treasure up the last words which are spoken by the dying. The farewell testimony of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, was this: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth—even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.”—(2 Samuel xxiii. 2–5.)

Here is a plain and unqualified expression of David’s faith*—faith in the influence of

* The language of divine faith is stronger and firmer, even when *deep calls unto deep*, and most certainly determines that it will not be in vain; and therefore, in the forty-second Psalm, not dubious and trembling, but with a steady voice, he silences all the noisy tumults of an agitated mind, and says, *Repose thyself on God, for I shall still praise Him*. Or, as it may be rendered, *I am going to praise Him*. Amid all those tempests which rage about me, I am thinking of that hymn of praise which I shall pay to Him for my deliverance, and for the happy exit out of all my sorrows. Though at present we have nothing in sight but darkness, and whirlwinds, and rocks, and the raging, foaming sea, let the skill and power of the Great Pilot be opposed to all these. And what the Psalmist says elsewhere of sailors, may evidently be applied to those who go down into the sea: they gain this by their dangers, that *they see the works* of this Great Pilot in the abyss, and contemplate *his wonders in the deep*. And he who gives himself up to His care, and fixes his

God's Holy Spirit, and faith in the Messiah's coming.

“The chamber where the good man meets his fate,”

is the place in which we may behold the manifestations of God's grace, in soothing the mind and changing the heart; in plucking away the sting of death, and opening wide the gates to everlasting glory. Who, that has been permitted to witness such a scene, has not breathed the fervent prayer, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”—(Numbers xxiii. 10.)

The Bible gives us no particulars about David's funeral; but Josephus (who is high authority in such matters) mentions that “he was buried by his son Solomon, in Jerusalem; with great magnificence.”*

eye and hope wholly on Him, though he be, or rather seems to be, shipwrecked, and lose all his goods, yet, if he does not *make shipwreck of faith*, he loses nothing that is properly his own. Nay, when he is swallowed up in the abyss of death, he does not perish, but swims through it to the further shore of eternity, where he finds a banquet, a palace prepared for him, and a *kingdom that cannot be moved*, but remains to endless ages.—*Leighton's Works*, p. 372.

* Antiq. v. vii. c. xv. § 3; also, Antiq. v. xiii. c. vii. § 4.

Even so late as St. Peter's time, as we find in the book of Acts, (ii. 29,) his sepulchre† was still in existence; and another authority informs us that "a part of the royal mausoleum fell down in the Emperor Adrian's reign,"‡ about one hundred and twenty years after our Saviour's birth.‡

The burial-place of so uncommon a man as David, ought certainly to have been marked by an appropriate monument; but Solomon did not display his accustomed wisdom in the lavish expenditure bestowed upon his father's tomb.

Money can be much more profitably spent than in costly grave-stones. Indeed, we are disposed to think that the Armenian priests acted for the best, when, finding it impossible to obtain suitable materials for the erection of a church, they instructed the people to bring together the tombstones of their

* Maundrell's Travels, p. 76; Stanley's Palestine, p. 147; and Thompson's "*The Land and the Book*," vol. ii. p. 477.

† Calmet, p. 331.

‡ Some things about the posterity of David, will be found in Mosheim's "*Historical Commentaries*," vol. i. p. 143, and Burton's "*Ecclesiastical History*," p. 256, 277, and 301.

ancestors, and devote them to the sacred purpose.*

The lesson which we should learn is this : that we ought to give much more than we do to the cause of true religion, for this will always be a *safe* investment, and one, the benefit of which, we shall never fail to reap.

Money may secure for any one fulsome flatteries, engraved on the purest marble, to be read, and ridiculed by men ; while acts of charity, done in faith and love, will be remembered and rewarded by God, at the great day of final account.

We close our simple record of the principle incidents in David's life, by a passage from one who had studied the writings of the poet-king with unwonted diligence and care :

“When we view the ‘man after God’s own heart—taking God for his portion—associating with his people, and feeding upon his word ; when we mark his zeal for his Master’s glory ; his devotedness and self-denial in his Master’s work—when we see him ever ready to confess his name, to bear his reproach, and caring only to answer it by a more steady adherence

* Curzon’s Travels in Armenia, p. 49, 50.

to his service—do we not in those lineaments of character recognize the picture of one who, in after times, could turn to the churches of Christ and say, ‘Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me?’ Or can we recollect the Psalmist’s insight into the extent and spirituality of the law of God, and his continual conflict with the indwelling sin—awakening in him the spirit of wrestling prayer, and confidence in the God of his salvation—and not be again forcibly reminded of him, who has left upon the record the corresponding history of his own experience—‘We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin: I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!’ In short, let his instance in prayer and praise be remembered—his determined and persevering cultivation of heart-religion and practical holiness, his hungering and thirsting after righteousness; his jealous fear and watchful tenderness against sin, and regard for the honor of God; his yearning compassion over his fellow-sin-

ners ; his spiritual taste ; his accurate discernment ; the ‘simplicity’ of his dependence, and the godly ‘sincerity’ of his obedience, his peace of mind and stability of profession ; his sanctified improvement of the cross ; his victory over the world ; his acknowledgment of the Lord’s mercy : his trials of faith and patience ; his heavenly liberty in the ways of God, his habitual living in his presence, and under the quickening, restraining, directing, and supporting influence of his word—let these holy exercises be considered—either separately, or as forming one admirable concentration of Christian excellence—and what do we desire more to complete the portrait of a finished servant of God upon the divine model ? Is not this a visible demonstration of the power of the Word, in ‘perfecting the man of God, and furnishing him thoroughly unto all good works ?’ ”*

P R A Y E R.

O God, Whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered : make us, we besecch thee, deeply

* Preface to Bridges’ Exposition of one hundred and nineteenth Psalm.

sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life ; and let Thy HOLY SPIRIT lead us through this vale of misery, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives : that when we shall have served Thee in our generation, we may be gathered unto our fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience ; in the communion of the Catholic Church ; in the confidence of a certain faith ; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope ; in favor with Thee our God, and in perfect charity with the world. All which we ask, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

LECTURE XII.

I WILL SET UP ONE SHEPHERD OVER THEM, AND HE SHALL FEED THEM, EVEN MY SERVANT DAVID; HE SHALL FEED THEM, AND HE SHALL BE THEIR SHEPHERD—AND I THE LORD WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND MY SERVANT DAVID A PRINCE AMONG THEM; I THE LORD HAVE SPOKEN IT.—Ezekiel xxxiv. 23, 24.

THOSE who skim over the surface of the Scriptures, without devoting much thought to the subject, have little idea how much they lose. We are speaking, now, simply of mental gratification and improvement. It would be almost superfluous to add, that they are also thus robbing the soul. The text has suggested the subject of types. In its literal sense, a type “denotes a rough draft, or less accurate model, from which a more perfect image is made; but, in the sacred, or theological sense of the term, it is a symbol of something future and distant, or an example prepared and evidently designed by God to

prefigure that future thing.”—(Horne’s Introduction, vol. i, p. 385.)

Several of the most prominent characters in the Old Testament history were types of Christ. In this way, the Jews were taught what sort of a person the Messiah should be, and a constant expectation of His coming was kept alive. The types are of essential service to Christians, because they testify of Christ as of one promised from the beginning; and they help, in various particulars, to illustrate His character and offices.

It is often said, that David was a type of Christ. There can be no doubt of the fact; yet very many are ignorant how, or why, the expression is used.

An unfolding of the text will enable us to understand this point—“I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd—and I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.”

No one can deny that it is the Messiah who is here called “David.” The Psalmist and King of Israel had been dead more than four

hundred years, when Ezekiel uttered this prediction. Besides, no person had appeared after David, to whom the appellation was given.

He was certainly and signally a type of Christ, both in respect of many things belonging to his person, and many passages relating to his life.

The Prophets often speak of the Messiah, by the name of David. Thus Jeremiah says, "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them."—(xxx. 9.) Hosea uses similar language: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days."—(iii. 5.)

It will help you to discover how David was a type of Christ, by noticing some of the corresponding passages in their history. Was our Saviour born (according to the prediction of the Prophets, (Mic. v. 2, Matt. ii. 5, 6,) in Bethlehem of Judea? This was the place of David's nativity. Was David taken from a low estate of life, and anointed to be King of Israel? The humbleness of his

parentage was only equalled by that of our Lord; and concerning the Messiah's exaltation to regal power, the Psalmist himself has said, speaking in the person of the Almighty Father, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion"—(Ps. ii. 6.) "Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."—(Ps. xlv. 8.)

David was an inspired Prophet, and many things which are mentioned, in close connection with events in his own life, had a direct and special reference to his great anti-type, the Messiah. Thus, it is said in the twenty-second Psalm, (18th v,) "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." And again, in the sixty-ninth Psalm, "They gave me gall (for my meat to eat), and when I was thirsty (in my thirst), they gave me vinegar to drink."—(21st v.)

This language was applicable in a figurative sense, to the trials and sufferings of David; it was exactly fulfilled in the mockery and crucifixion of Christ. The resemblance which the Messiah bears to David will be made still more evident, by noticing the offices ascribed to Him in the text.

I. The Messiah was to be a *shepherd*.

David had been a shepherd also. When the savage "lion," and the prowling "bear," came to attack the flock, young as he was, he periled his life to protect his helpless charge—(1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35.) Even when called to sit upon the throne of Israel, he seemed to hold a pastoral crook, instead of a regal sceptre. In a figurative sense, he was a shepherd still. Hence it is said in the Psalms, (lxxviii. 70, 71,) that God "chose David His servant, and took him away from the sheep-folds; * * * that he might feed Jacob his people, and Israel His inheritance."

But the Messiah, of whom David was a type, is most justly styled, "the *great* SHEPHERD of the sheep."—(Heb. xiii. 20.) No words could describe with greater accuracy the life which our Saviour led, than the language which the Prophet had put into his mouth, so long before—"Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out, * * * and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day, * * I will feed them in a good pasture; and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be."—(Ezek. xxxiv. 11-14.) When our Saviour began

His public ministry, He announced Himself as "the good Shepherd."—(St. John x. 11.) In His care for the sick and sorrowing, were not these prophecies fulfilled? "He shall seek the lost—He shall bring back that which has been driven away—He shall bind up the broken-hearted." In his tenderness and affection for helpless infancy, do we not see a reflection of that moving picture, which Isaiah drew? "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."—(xl. 11.)

David exposed himself to the most imminent danger, to save his sheep from harm. Of the Messiah, it is said, that He "laid down His life for the sheep."—(St. John x. 15.)

II. Again, it was foretold, in the text, that the Messiah, like David, should be a *prince*.

Even after the Prophet of God had anointed the son of Jesse to be king, it seemed a doubtful point, whether the dignity ever would be reached. Indeed, the chances of success were so over-balanced, by opposing ills, that one of little faith would certainly have despaired. The giant Philistine raised

his hand to strike the stripling down. Ill-tempered Saul requites his kindness, by plans for speedy death. His own son heads a rebellion against him. His bosom friend turns traitor. A helpless fugitive, and shedding bitter tears, he crossed the brook Kedron, which our Lord afterwards passed over, on His way to crucifixion. But God's promise failed not. Dangers and troubles only helped along His purposes of mercy. David was at last restored to the throne, and blessed with peace. Looking back upon the rough and rugged road, which he had been forced to tread, he could say, in reference to God's providence and grace, "THOU hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; THOU hast made me the head of the heathen."—(Ps. xviii. 43.)

Were not these particulars in David's life most wonderfully gone over with afresh by our blessed Lord?

The infant Saviour had hardly made his appearance in the world, before the cruel Herod sought to slay him. He was carried, for safety, to a foreign land—(St. Matt. ii. 14, 15.) His words were mild, and His actions free from fault, but spies were hired to

watch, and hellish plots were laid. Miraculous power was more than once put forth, to enable Him to escape—(St. Luke iv. 29, 30, &c.) When His errand of mercy was done, such precautions were no longer used. One of His own disciples sold Him to His enemies. The traitor, Judas, like David's faithless friend, tormented with remorse, went and hanged himself—(Ps. lxxix. 25, and cix. 8; Acts i. 20.)

But what were the Psalmist's troubles, compared with those of Him, who was despised and rejected of men; "Who bore our grief, and carried our sorrows;" Who "was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" Who was "cut off from the land of the living?"

And yet, as David's anti-type, the Messiah was to be "a prince!" The promise had gone forth: "I shall give Thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."—(Psalms ii. 8.) "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David. He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."—(St. Luke i. 32-33.)

All this appeared most unlikely. But Death

was vanquished. The grave was robbed of its prey. Jesus was triumphant; and now the prediction is made good: "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be a PRINCE and a Saviour."—(Acts v. 31.)

• Have *we* no interest in these offices which the Messiah was commissioned to discharge?

II. If we are indeed "His people," and "the sheep of His pasture," to us is the promise given, "I the Lord will be their God."

No words can convey an adequate idea of what is here implied. God is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift. His faithful servants are abundantly supplied from this exhaustless source. His protecting care succors and defends them, day by day. Troubles and distractions may arise; but the God of comfort and consolation will be always near. None but those who have devoted themselves to His service, with a determination, by the help of Divine grace, to walk in the ways of His laws, and do the works of His commandments, can at all "comprehend * * * what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." (Ephes. iv. 18, 19.)

The government of the "prince of peace"

is the only one which time shall not destroy. The flock which has chosen Him for their Shepherd, the only one which shall not soon be scattered.

How important, then, to know whether or not Christ sustains these relations to us.

Is He *our* Shepherd? If so, we have been gathered into the one true fold, His Church.

Is He our Prince? If so, we have enlisted under His standard. We have been signed with the cross in baptism, in token of our allegiance. We are bravely fighting in His cause. Blessed are they who obey this Shepherd's voice. They "shall go in and out, and find pasture."—(St. John x. 9.) He will make "an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David."—(Isaiah lv. 3.)

Blessed are they who follow the steps of this all-powerful Prince. No defeat need be dreaded, while HE leads. They shall come off more than conquerors, through Him who hath loved them.

When men make promises to one another, there are many chances that they will not be kept. They may never have meant to do so. Even if their intentions be good, circumstances may render them quite unable to do as they

could wish. How many leaders, who have gained their ends by the devotion and efforts of their followers, have disappointed them, at last, in the rewards they hoped to gain! But in the midst of things so unstable,—so little to be trusted: there is *One* whose promises *certainly* will be kept. The blessings offered in my text rest upon such a foundation. They may seem “great and precious,” beyond what “we desire or deserve,” but who can doubt, that faithful Christians will realize them all, when the warrant for this confidence is so sure: “I the Lord have spoken it!” “With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Hundreds of years passed by, before Ezekiel’s words were fully accomplished; but in due time, David’s anti-type, the true Messiah, appeared as the Shepherd of His people, and began His reign as a Prince.

Faith is no longer tried and tested, by being obliged to wait. All the consolation which we need in our sorrows, all the strength which our conflicts require, may be found in HIM, who has compassion and sympathy for our sufferings, and abundant power to save.

I am pointing you to no delusive hope, my

brethren, when I bid you find comfort in the text. The promise is meant for you, for me, for all who will *seek*, and strive, and persevere. "I shall set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it."

COLLECT.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love Thee; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

E N D.

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